THROUGH THE KENNET AND AVON CANAL BY MOTOR BOAT

C. HERBERT SMITH

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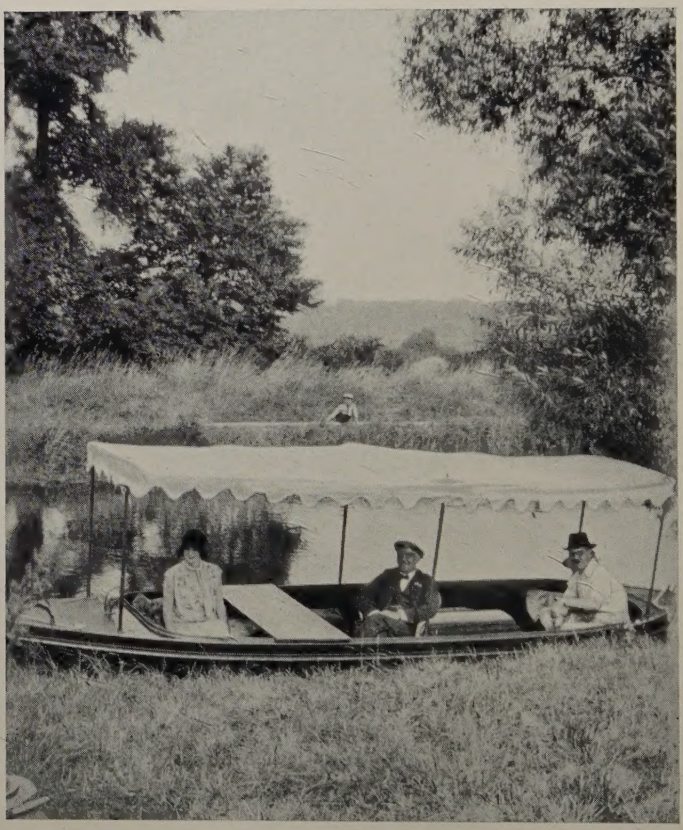

THE BOAT WITH AUTHOR, WIFE AND FRIEND
ON CANAL, NEAR BRADFORD-ON-AVON.

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THROUGH THE KENNET AND AVON CANAL BY MOTOR BOAT

BY

CYRIL HERBERT SMITH

LONDON:
GEORGE ROBERTS
24 GREAT RUSSELL STREET, W.C.1
1929

20629
T 914.2.21

Made and Printed in Great Britain by Glovers, Bristol and Weston-super-Mare.

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

TO MY

FELLOW PASSENGER

WHOSE HELP THROUGHOUT HAS BEEN

INVALUABLE

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PREFACE

Probably the first intimation we have of the use of the inland waterways of this country goes back to an existing record that the Danes sailed up the River Lee to the town of Hertford in the year 894 A.D. We know in addition that the Romans built a canal in Lincolnshire, known as the Foss Dyke Canal, and which was later scoured out by Henry I. in the year 1121 A.D. Intermittent records inform us that in each century after this certain Acts and Ordinances were passed improving the rivers and waterways to make them more readily navigable to vessels and water borne craft.

The great canal era, however, did not commence till some centuries later; and previously to then practically all merchandise was carried by carts or pack mules. In the seventeenth century many Acts were passed by which rivers of the country were rendered passable to traffic by the formation of weirs and locks, but we have to go into the next century to see this work continued to any great extent, and it was between 1700 and 1800 that the greatest majority of our canals in this country were created.

The most famous canal engineers were born in this century, viz., James Brindley, Francis third Duke of Bridgewater, William Jessop, Thomas Telford, and lastly John Rennie, in the year 1761, who died October 4th, 1821. It was due to the last of these that this story is mostly concerned, since he was the engineer of the Kennet and Avon Canal, through which the writer passed during the summer of 1928.

The correct definition of this waterway should be the Kennet and Avon Navigation and Canal; since at either end the navigation of the River Avon from Bristol to Bath and the River Kennet from Reading to Newbury, are of much older formation than the canal itself, which joins Bath to Newbury. The Act for the former was passed in the year 1712, and for the latter in 1715. It was not till nearly a century later that the Act for the canal itself was passed.

viz., in the year 1794, which was followed the next year by the Act for the Wilts and Berks Canal, which joined the Kennet and Avon at Semington, and the Somerset Coal Canal, which joined the same by Dundas Aqueduct.

In the year 1798 the canal was opened to traffic as far as Hungerford from Reading, and in 1801 from Bath to Devizes, but it was not till the year 1810 that the canal was completely opened up to through traffic from the river Thames to the Bristol Channel, which included the completion of the Savernake Tunnel. The canal was primarily, and for nearly half-a-century, owned by a private company, passing eventually by purchase into the hands of the Great Western Railway Company, in the year 1852, who are still the owners of the same.

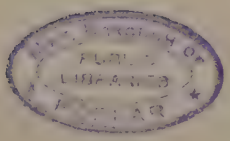
Far be it from anyone to belittle the Great Western Railway Company as such who own probably the finest rail road in the world to-day, with the fastest trains, most excellent rolling stock, and best laid track, On the other hand we have to thank this Railway Company that most, if not all, of the canals towards the West of England are now no longer existent or partially derelict.

The obligations imposed by Section 17 of the Railway and Canal Traffic Act of 1873 as regards maintenance in good working condition, appears at any rate in the case of this Railway Company, to have been a dead letter. But even where the obligations under this Act have been more or less complied with, it has been easy to discourage traffic by such means as indifferent to the requirements of the traders ,the imposition of the full maximum tolls in all cases, and the ordering of frequent stoppages for repairs.

No doubt it has been the policy of the Railway Company, and possibly a wise policy from their standpoint, to divert the traffic from the canal on to their railway line, and thereby increase their gross receipts. Again it may have paid them in the past to have purchased the canals with this in view, and to get rid of a competitor. Wherever they have set out to so act it has certainly, in most cases, been accomplished, notwithstanding the Act of Parliament mentioned above. The following canals and waterways which have now gone derelict have been owned, partially owned, or unduly strangled by the Great Western Railway Company. The list is a formidable one :—

(1) The Upper Avon Navigation from Evesham to Stratford-on-Avon.
(2) The Thames and Severn Canal.
(3) The Grand Western Canal (partially).
(4) The Hereford and Gloucester Canal.
(5) The Somerset Coal Canal.
(6) The Wilts and Berks Canal.
(7) The North Wilts Canal.

Methods of transport change. Looking back into history we see first the pack mule, next the Canal era, followed by the Railway era. Who will say that a motor transport era will not soon have taken from the railways what the railways took from the canals. Again this method of transport may be followed by an Aerial era. At any rate, some of our old canals do still exist, and the Great Western Railway do, at any rate, keep the Kennet and Avon still passable, and to what extent this old waterway is still passable the reader of this narrative will in due course be made acquainted.



PART I

INTRODUCTION

For some years we have been in possession of a small motor boat on the River Thames, most of which waterway we have traversed from time to time. There is no place on the River Thames which is reasonably close to that part of the world where we live ; Lechlade would be our nearest point, but even that is some distance away, entailing considerable time taken up by a road journey if and when we want to use the boat. We therefore thought we should like to bring the boat nearer to our home, and conceived the idea to use the above navigation to get her through on to the river Avon at Bath, where she would be close to us, and we could use her without taking a long road journey there and back.

The boat had been wintered at Reading, which is a point where the Kennet and Avon Navigation and Canal joins the Thames. We have had some experience of this waterway since in the late summer of 1926 we took the boat from Reading as far as Newbury and back. We knew, therefore, that late in the year this waterway is infested with weeds, and that if we were to get through on this trip as far as Bath it would be essential that the journey should be made early in the summer before the weeds started to grow to any serious extent. We therefore decided to make an attempt during the Whitsun recess.

Before passing on to tell you of our actual experience it should be noted that this waterway, although not derelict, is not kept in a very navigable condition ; in fact, there has been no through traffic for many years. The Kennet and Avon Navigation and Canal is the property of the Great Western Railway Company, who purchased the undertaking many years ago. It is not proposed in this account to raise arguments as to any reason why this waterway is not in use at the present time, or why it is in its existing condition.

The Great Western Railway Company made some time back proposals that it should be closed down altogether, but these proposals are not now being proceeded with. It is sufficient to state that under their Act the Company are supposed to keep the waterway in a navigable state, and this much can be said that we did and have brought our boat through it *for forty-nine miles, and we have probably passed through what is undoubtedly the worst portion of it.

Before entering into details of the journey we would say that the boat has been brought through these forty-nine miles under great difficulties. These difficulties and troubles will be dealt with later on ; still it does show that the Company have, at any rate, kept the waterway passable for a small boat such as ours. Whether, however, a loaded barge could make the journey is open to question. They would meet with much trouble on the way, in fact, if a barge were fully loaded it is almost certain they could not get through. A barge partially loaded might manage it.

At this point it is proposed to give some description of our craft, which is fitted with a seven horse-power petrol motor. It is twenty feet long, four feet beam, flat bottomed, and drawing, when loaded, about one foot to eighteen inches of water. The engine is aft, and the boat is fitted forward with an oil cooking stove. She is sufficiently large by removing some of our paraphernalia on to the shore, to sleep on board, and in bad weather we are able to cook our food entirely on the boat. She is fitted with an awning and side curtains, which fix down and make her wind and water tight when at rest or at night.

The transmission consists of a neutral, forward and reverse, so that it is not absolutely necessary when passing through locks to stop the engine.

* Refers to Part I

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CHAPTER I

WE START FROM HOME—READING—BOAT-KEEPER'S DELAYS—COUNTY LOCK—THE "SWAN" AT BURFORD

We left our home with all our various stores and provisions on Saturday, May 26th, 1928, at twelve o'clock, and proceeded to take train to Reading. The party consisted of my wife and myself, a young man we took with us to help, and one dog (which by the way did not help much). We arrived at Reading in the early afternoon, and commandeered an outside porter to carry our paraphernalia as far as the boat, which was situated about a mile from the Railway Station. Having sent on our stores we went to purchase some further small items which we had not brought with us. We arrived at the Rafts somewhere about three-thirty, and found the stores waiting there for us, but alas! the boat was not ready. We had ordered sometime before a new awning, which should have been easily supplied and fixed in time, but this awning had not come, although it was expected any moment. We were, therefore, hung up, and we had nothing else to do but to wait. We proceeded to load up the boat with our stores, and get things generally ready and in place. Owing to special arrangements with the Great Western Railway, we had to pass through Fobney Lock that night, i.e., our fourth lock. We began to despair, but when we had almost given up hope, the new awning arrived; then it would not fit, and had to be considerably altered. Eventually, at about six o'clock, we actually got the engine going and pushed off. We had two Thames conservancy locks to pass before getting into the canal proper. These we passed with only a few minor mishaps, such as dropping our boat hook in mid-stream, and getting our propeller weeded up. The first time out of many hundreds of the same trouble to follow. At six-thirty we reached the County Lock No. 106, being the first on the canal proper, where we had to pay our tolls for the trip, get

our pass and our lock key. The lock keeper had given us up, and was just going into the town to do his Saturday night shopping. Luckily we caught him and brought him back. After more delay we fixed up these details and were launched on our great adventure. We proceeded comfortably to Fobney Lock, No. 105, reaching there about seven o'clock. The lock keeper had gone, but we were lucky to obtain assistance, and except that we were very nearly swamped by our helper opening the top lock gate paddles too quickly, we passed through this lock in time, viz., that Saturday evening. We then proceeded, and our next adventure was our first swing bridge. To open this our assistant had to be landed, also my wife, as she had experience of these abominations, whereas he had not. Landing was difficult, as the sides were boggy ; but they eventually both got off with some mud. This bridge opened easily, and we then passed into Southcote, Lock No. 104, where again we were lucky to obtain a helper who understood the working—our young man here getting his first experience and insight into opening and closing locks on the waterway. Passing through this we met our second swing bridge, and again we had to land two of the party. These two then preferred to walk, and the boat then went on to the Swan at Burghfield, our first camping station. Unfortunately it came on to rain, and the walkers got somewhat damp, despite the fact that mackintoshes were handed to them as soon as the boat could be moored.

We reached this first night's mooring station at about 8.15 p.m. Next we had to land and unpack our stores, always a difficult task the first night, as nobody knows where anything is ; but luckily the rain had ceased. To add to our troubles, however, our cooking stove refused to work, the wicks having got saturated with water while the boat was lying idle. We did manage some tea with the help of our spirit stove, and cold food, but darkness had set in before we got our bed down and things settled for the night. Our young man was sent off soon after arrival to get himself fixed up on shore at the nearest pub, and so at last to bed about 11 p.m., the first night of our adventure. We slept ill that night, conditions were strange, the blankets rough, and our mattress hard. Later we were often only too glad for bed and slept as if on a feather mattress. We have forgotten the dog. She has been on these trips with us before, and

understands exactly what to do. She has her place in the boat by day and by night, and well knows both. She will sit on the bank while all is going on till bed is ready and the side curtains are down, then she will get into her place in the stern behind the engine. Our sleeping quarters are forward of the engine. We have a table on board in front of our sleeping quarters and behind the cooking stove. On this is placed last thing at night all requirements for tea in the morning. The spirit stove has only to be lit and we have our early morning tea and biscuits in bed before arising for the day, and well we need it since breakfast is often late, there is so much to do before we can partake of that meal.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST DAY'S JOURNEY—BAD BRIDGE AT THEALE—TROUBLE WITH TOWNEY'S LOCK AND ALDERMASTON BRIDGE—WOOLHAMPTON

Next day, Whit Sunday, dawned most brilliant ; the sun shone fiercely till it sank to rest that night. It was exceedingly hot on this canal, and well we knew it before that day had passed.

The first act after rising, following the early morning tea, is to have a swim with the dog. Then begins the business of getting breakfast and clearing up the boat. These duties are divided equally, one does the cooking, the other gets everything ready on board, rolls up the side curtains and clears up the night outfit. It all takes time. That morning the stove had to be persuaded to work, which it did after great efforts and the removal of the wicks. Breakfast was at last cooked and eaten. Next we have to get ourselves washed, cleaned and straightened for the day, and lastly all the stores have to be re-packed up, placed on board, and oil and petrol tanks filled up. All this is seldom accomplished much before mid-day, when the mooring masts are pulled up, the engine started, and we push off into mid-stream. Our young man had turned up and helped us to get all on board. The passengers and crew travel in front of the engine, the steersman, who is also engineer, behind.

The evening before we accomplished three miles from Reading, and five locks. Whit Sunday we covered ten miles and ten locks. Before passing on to the actual details of the journey it would be as well to explain that once we have started we do not usually stop again until our evening site is selected for staying the night. This is the custom we have followed on all our trips. Further food is taken on the boat as a rule while she is in motion, the navigator receiving pieces of food passed across to him over the engine There have

been occasions when these rules have been broken, especially if we should pass an attractive place where we can get ashore to have a cup of tea.

Now to the details of the journey. It is proposed to mention each of the locks, but not the swing bridges unless they call for comment. They are too numerous on the Kennet Navigation. After leaving our camping station at Burghfield Village, we passed through to Burghfield Lock No. 103. No comment especially is required in regard to this lock, nor to Garston No. 102, Sheffield No. 101, or Sulhampstead No. 100. A proportion of this part of the canal is in the Kennet itself, and while in this stream, weeds, our abomination, are absent. It is in the cuts where the locks have been made that we meet with our troubles from these and in the canal proper after passing Newbury. Contrary to our rules we pulled up for lunch under some trees after passing Sulhampstead Lock. It was just after this we met with our first troublesome swing bridge, carrying a main road. These bridges are seldom opened, and with the weight of present day traffic passing over them they get out of place and jammed. On this occasion it took nearly an hour to open this bridge, and we had at least nearly a dozen men helping us to open it. We should like to say that wherever we met with troubles on this journey we found everybody only too ready to give us a helping hand. Also we should like to record the great assistance we received throughout the trip from the Company's lock keepers and servants generally. Except for Sulhampstead and Tile Mill Locks, we were helped through all the locks during the whole of the trip up to where the boat lies at this time, viz., Honeystreet Wharf. These lock keepers were most obliging, continuing with the boat past their own beats until we met with the next lock keeper. The arrangement on this canal is different from the Thames, where a lock keeper resides at each lock. On the canal a lock keeper has a distance under his management, which usually includes five or six locks, possibly more, but seldom less ; this, at any rate, as far as to the summit level at Crofton. To return to our bridge. With the help of wedges, crowbars and a saw, the bridge at last swung round, and we could pass through. The journey through to Tile Mill Lock, No. 99, to Ufton No. 98, was uneventful. Ufton Lock No. 98 is the shallowest on the Navigation, being only

a fall of about one foot, whereas the next lock to it, No. 97, Towney's is the deepest and possibly the worst. We went up from Ufton to Towney's without mishap ; although originally a bad, weedy reach, it has lately been cleaned out and is better. The gates of Towney's opened for us, and we passed in. We felt lucky not to have to come out the way we went in with the boat on top of us. Our helper at this juncture was not the lockman for this distance, but the one who had come through with us. The bottom gates closed and the lock began to fill. However, it *would not* fill. It filled within a foot or two of the top, but this was too much pressure to get the top gates to open. Everybody assisted the lockman. He said it was impossible, and we must abandon the trip and return to Reading. This we refused absolutely to do. He then went off, walking, to find the lock keeper in whose charge this lock was, and left our boat tied in the lock, which was full all but a foot of water ; the deepest lock of all having, one would judge without measurement, about twenty feet of water in it. The bottom gates were creaking and popping all the time. On investigation, in his absence, we found a large hole beside the main carrying timber of one of the bottom gates, and the water was pouring out of this wholesale. We were in great fear that this gate would give way when our boat would have gone crashing down into the next reach with this weight of water. After about half-an-hour's wait, while the gate still stood, the proper lock keeper arrived with his mate. All four of us then got our backs up against the arm of the gate, with heels in the ground, and by straightening our legs we managed to open the gate about two inches. We held it there for a time to allow more water through this opening; it then closed with a bump. We followed this several times, each time opening a little wider. At last the gate swung far enough to allow a greater influx, and the pressure at last was lost, and slowly we got it right open and passed the boat out. Thankful we were when the gate was closed again behind us. Owing to the leaky bottom gate these manœuvres had nearly emptied the reach above, and it was with difficulty we found enough water to get along, especially as it was somewhat weedy here. However, we got through to Padworth Lock No. 96 ; another bad lock, but not so terrifying or so troublesome as the last. We then came to the swing bridge carrying the main road at Alder-

maston. Again we had a long wait, and dozens of people helping with crowbars to get the bridge to move. Lines of cars were waiting on either side to get across, and they kept accumulating while we waited in mid-stream with our engine running for the bridge to move. At last it did, and we passed, as eventually the cars did, after it had closed again. Next and almost adjoining the bridge was Aldermaston Lock No. 95, which we got through safely, but when the top lock gates opened we were confronted with a long straight cut full up with weeds. We decided to face it with the engine, but five times within a hundred yards we had to stop and clear the propeller, and later when we got into better water we had continually to reverse the engine to throw them off. That half-mile took us about half-an-hour to get through. At last the cut emerged into the Kennet, and we pulled up alongside, got out and cleaned her propeller thoroughly. We sailed up in great style to Woolhampton main road bridge—another swing bridge. This came open better, and we passed to Woolhampton Lock No. 94, adjoining. Crowds of holiday folk came to see us pass through. It was getting late—eight o'clock or more—but we could not fix up for the night amongst all these crowds. The reach was good, so we passed on to the tail of the next lock and tied up for the night just short of the bottom lock gates. We bundled out the stores, got the stove alight, soon the kettle boiled, and we drank cups and cups of good hot, strong tea. Supper was swiftly prepared ; our man went off to stay with the lock keeper. Supper things were washed up and put away, and the bed let down, the things for the early morning laid out, the dog fed, the lamps lit and the stores on shore covered up with waterproofs for the night. The curtains were let down and tied for the night, and so to sleep about eleven o'clock, a sleep this time of complete exhaustion, but not before we were able to jot down a few notes of our journey from which this is compiled.

CHAPTER III

LOCKS ON THE CANAL—DIFFICULTIES AT WIDMEAD AND BULLS—HAM MANOR HOTEL—WATER SHORTAGE AT NEWBURY —METHYLATED SPIRIT TRAGEDY—BAD WEEDS ABOVE HIGG'S—NIGHT AT BEEDHAM

We were awakened about seven o'clock the next morning by the sound of rain on our awning. This delayed our start that morning later than usual, and we did not get away until the middle of the day had passed, since we had to wait until the rain had ceased before we could prepare our breakfast and other matters which necessitated getting out of the boat. The rain, however, was not of very long duration and was only really heat drops, so that Whit Monday was, if anything, hotter than the previous day. We accomplished during Whit Monday, owing to our start being later than usual, a distance of seven miles only, but we passed through eleven locks. As the journey continued, so our difficulties increased both in regard to delays through opening of locks and troubles with weeds.

The lock keeper for our next reach came to us about eleven o'clock. We informed him that he would have to return a good deal later and to come back at twelve o'clock. At twelve-thirty everything was on board, the boat was ready and the engine started.

Our first lock was No. 93, Hale's, which we passed through without any difficulty. The reach above this was fairly free from weeds and we went through to No. 92, Midgham. This was a brick lock and here we would interpose some remarks in regard to the locks on the Kennet and Avon Canal. The canal and navigation consists of three sections :

(1) Kennet River section ;
(2) The Kennet and Avon Canal section ;
(3) The River Avon section.

In the Kennet River section the locks are larger than they

are in the Canal section, and will accommodate larger boats. Also in the Kennet section the locks are formed in the majority of cases of wooden sides about half-way up, held in place with iron rails which are carried up to top water-level. Above the wooden sides the banks of the locks are dug out at a gentle slope so that these locks when full take a very large quantity of water, the surface water of the lock when full being about double that of the surface water when empty, also sides consisting only of turf suck up a lot of water. They do not all consist of wooden locks as occasionally here and there you come across a brick one, and this is the reason why I have referred to Midgham as again being a brick lock.

To return to our journey : having passed through Midgham, we proceeded on our way towards Colthrop, No. 91, which is adjoining the large paper works near Thatcham. Between Midgham and Colthrop we had some trouble with the engine, and some delay occurred here owing to the necessity of taking down some of the water cooling circulation pipes as the engine was getting over-heated. We took the opportunity at the same time to clean off the propeller, an operation which was always carried out at each lock, but which could not be done very thoroughly from inside the boat. To clean the propeller properly it was necessary to run the boat alongside, get out into the water in the shallows, and get one's arm underneath along the propeller shaft. The great trouble with weeds was not on the propeller itself, but on the shaft, as these became entwined round and round the shaft like so much rope ; in fact, on many occasions, it was necessary to use a knife to cut them off. Time after time this operation had to be carried out during the trip ; sometimes on occasions, two or three times every few hundred yards. We proceeded now up and into Colthrop, but were delayed reaching it by weeds again. We emerged through the lock and there was a good stretch of deep water with no weeds, but owing to the trouble in the reach below we were unable to get full benefit of this until we could get the boat alongside a shallow and again clear the weeds off her. Our lock keeper who started had now left us and we picked up the man belonging to the next reach. We passed through safely after clearing the propeller to lock No. 90, Monkey-Marsh.

Our next reach caused us a good deal of trouble ; it was

short of water and rather weedy. The water had been out of this reach some time owing to repairs, and it had only recently been let in, and a lot of the water in the reach was finding its way into the ground until this had become saturated. We managed to pass through, however, without cleaning the propeller, but were obliged to do so before entering the next lock, a useless operation had we only known. The next lock is No. 89, Widmead. This was under repair, and here we wanted to wait to get out some food, it being past four o'clock. The lock keeper, however, informed us that one of the swing bridges above Bull's Lock, higher up, could not be opened unless the men repairing No. 89 were sent forward to get it opened for us. These men left work at five o'clock. We therefore decided that we must push on in order to be past this bridge before five o'clock. We passed through Widmead Lock, it filled and the top gates opened ; in front of us for three hundred yards might have been dry land, since the waterway was so choked with weeds. It was quite impossible for us to think of using our engine through this, and we were somewhat at a loss to know what to do. We tried to paddle the boat through it but found we could make no progress ; eventually, however, we threw a line, after several attempts, ashore to the lock keeper and we made fast on the boat for him to pull us through. The lock keeper pulled us valiantly, but owing to there being no way on the boat we could not steer, and he simply pulled us straight into the bank. The tow-line he had also was too short, so we threw him out another line to join on to the first. We then with great efforts—by use of a mop which we had on board—managed to get the boat off the mud on which she was stuck by the side of the bank. The lock keeper joined up the tow-rope and started again. He pulled us some twenty yards forward and again we went into the bank. The lock keeper had both his heels in the ground and was pulling for all he was worth ; the boat was on the bottom, something was bound to give. The joint where he had joined the tow-lines together came undone and the lock keeper took several somersaults backward off the tow-path into the rushes. This, of course, caused us considerable amusement, but it did not get us out of our trouble. Again, with the help of the mop, we managed to push the boat off the mud. This manœuvre was gone through three or

four times. The rope did not break again. At last we got her head through the worst of the weeds.

At this point the Cut joins the Kennet, which was running with a strong stream straight over a weir. Our propeller was clogged up with weeds, and we could not have held the boat up against the stream without the engine. It was rather ticklish work. We had to clean the propeller as best we could from inside the boat, and we had to get the stern out of the weeds into the stream without fouling her again, since we were not particularly anxious to be tipped over the weir. We started the engine, put in our forward speed and the boat moved out of the weeds into the river. It was touch and go whether we should be swept down the stream or would the engine hold us up sufficiently. The engine won the battle, but only just. We got her head against the stream and we took her across the river up against the bank. Here we hung on ; it was a strong stream running ; while the engineer got out into the water and divested the propeller of its coating of weeds. We were now comfortable once more, but we had passed through a bad half-an-hour. In addition we were getting famished since we had had no food since about eleven o'clock, and it was now close on five o'clock. From this point up to Bull's Lock, No. 88, we were in the Kennett, and although against the stream, with the propeller clear of weeds we ran comfortably up to this lock, but we had to get right into the tail of the lock to keep out of the stream. When we arrived, we were up against further difficulties ; the lock was also undergoing repairs and we found they could not get the bottom gate opened owing to the top gates leaking. At any rate, we took the opportunity while waiting near the tail of the lock to eat a trifle of food. There was only one arm on the gate ; the other arm was off for repairs. How it was eventually opened we could not exactly say, beyond we think the lock keeper had collected as many men as possible ; most of those sent forward to open the swing bridge just mentioned before. After a delay of about half-an-hour, the lock gate was opened and we passed in. We came out successfully, and we again gave the propeller a clean up.

The next reach to No. 87, Ham Mills, was uneventful. It was a good reach free of weeds and very pretty. We passed into Ham Mills Lock. When this lock gates opened, we

found ourselves opposite the lawns of the Ham Manor Hotel. We knew this hotel well as we often stayed there when motoring the road from Calne to London. We decided that we would break the journey here and have some tea. We asked the lock keeper if he would mind waiting a half to three-quarters of an hour and he agreed. It was Whit Monday; the hotel was full of people in their smart motoring clothes passing up and down the Bath Road. What they must have thought of our party passes all comprehension. We were untidy, dirty, sockless and stockingless, and with just sufficient clothes for decency's sake. However, we marched boldly in and demanded tea after tying up the boat to their landing stage. Luckily, the proprietor knew us well and although possibly some of the guests must have thought us tramps, still we had an excellent tea. Here we must talk about methylated spirit. There should have been a tin full of this on the boat left over from last year, but our boatman at Reading had omitted to put it on and we had omitted to check the stores owing to the delays in getting the awning ready and in our haste to get off. Luckily, we had brought a quart bottle full with us, but this was now nearly empty. We besought the proprietor to help us, and he unearthed three small medicine bottles full which helped us to fill our bottle. It was Bank Holiday, so we could not stop to purchase elsewhere. With luck, this should have lasted us to Hungerford, but the luck was out, as shall be narrated later. Anyway, we returned to the boat refreshed with much tea drunk and stores replenished. We had been travelling as mentioned with but few garments. The sun had so burnt our arms and legs that it was unbearable to wear anything on those parts. To put on a coat for decencies' sake while in the hotel divested the tea of half the appreciation we should otherwise have felt, and we were glad when back in the boat to rid ourselves of all superfluous garments again. We re-embarked at six-thirty, paddled across the stream to again clean the propeller, and continued the journey feeling refreshed. We were now close in to Newbury, and people crowded the banks to watch us go by. Our next lock was No. 86, Greenham. Before we got there we again encountered weeds. We passed through this lock, a very large one, exceptionally wide at the top level. Our next reach was fairly good, but owing to

weeds already on the propeller and as we were again going into the Kennet with a strong stream we stopped to clean up. As before, the cut ran into a fast-flowing stream, and coming out of the one you meet the current broadside on. You want all your engine-power to turn her head against the current. This occurs time after time in the Kennet River section. On this occasion also, we again met difficulties in the shape of a sand bank all across the mouth of the cut. Luckily, we noticed it in time and found a small channel close to the bank of the cut we could pass through. Once in the Kennet with a clean propeller and our head to the stream we were well away. We sailed through the town of Newbury in great style to Newbury Lock, No. 85. Here was some delay, as we had to show our tickets and get them endorsed. It should be stated that Greenham Lock, No. 86, was the last of the wooden sided locks. Newbury Lock is brick. We passed out, but were at once in trouble as there was very little water. About a hundred yards in front of the lock is a cut, and then you pass into the Kennet again, which at this place is a mill pond. Owing to the Bank Holiday, the millowners had drawn their hatches, and the water was nearly out. To pass from the cut into the stream we ran into a mud bank, but the propellor got us off after some struggling. We had, however, again to get out to clean her. Then a little further deeper water beyond the millpond hatches. For about three miles we got along first-rate, until ahead of us we saw the cut which led to the next lock. Across this was a large bank of weed. We ran the boat hard at these and put the engine in neutral ; but it did not take us right through, so we had to put her in gear again and got weeded at once. This cut, owing to the mill below having drawn its hatches, was half empty, and we had half-an-hour of hard work cleaning propeller, punting, pushing and paddling to get her about a quarter-of-a-mile. People from Newbury were following us along the bank and we were looking for a place for the night. It was getting late and were near the end of our tether. Still we could not stop here and we had to push on through to the next lock, Gwyer's, No. 84. The next reach was better, deeper water and less weeds, so we made haste to try to escape the followers up to Higgs', No. 83. We went through, and as before, the top gate opened. Still some of the people had come on with us. In front of us, as far as we could see, was one mass

of every sort of weed. The engine was now quite impossible, the hour was late, and we were nearly finished. An argument ensued should we tie up for the night just outside the lock. We decided that owing to the followers we could not, and must push on and shake them off. We got out the tow-line, made fast to the boat, and started to pull her through the weeds. We pressed three boys into helping us and pushed on. Gradually the followers fell away. We only had the boys towing, and about three others. We pushed on to the tail of the next lock and decided at last we could stop. Now the tragedy. We were undecided which side to stop. We tried the side opposite the tow-path, but found insufficient water; so we had to come back. In moving the paddle across the boat we knocked over our one bottle of methylated, and it fell against the engine, breaking into a thousand pieces. Gone was our early morning tea, or making tea quickly that evening. We were dead beat, it was nearly dark, and then this happened. However, we made the best of it, fixed up the boat, got out our cooking stove, and got it alight. Our man had now to find a bed. We were in a lonely country district, the nearest was a keeper's cottage; this was full. Anyway, we heard that there was another cottage about half-a-mile distant, and we packed him off there. We saw him not again until the next morning anyway. We had our own troubles to contend with at this late hour. It appears that he got into a farmhouse eventually and fared well. It is unnecessary to go through our formulæ again of getting ready for the night, sufficient that eventually the kettle boiled, we ate some tinned food, fed the dog and fell asleep, but not before the keeper came across to see us had helped us by re-fixing the boat, and had brought us a small spot of methylated spirit they happened to have in the house. Sufficient just for our early tea, and only just. He ended by trying to frighten us with stories of poachers who would steal all our stores, but we were really too weary to trouble much then if they did or did not. Anyway, they did not, since everything next morning was as we left it the night before. So ended the second full day of our trip.

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CHAPTER IV

ENGINE TROUBLE—EPISODE BY DREWITT'S LOCK—KINTBURY REACH—BEAUTIES OF THE CANAL—MR. CHIVERS TO OUR AID —HUNGERFORD

The next morning we were too weary to get a move on very early and again it must have been twelve-thirty before we got away. If the previous day was difficult, the next day was, if anything, worse still. We only covered seven miles again and nine locks ; but this was due to some extent to engine trouble, as will be narrated later. The morning performance having been already fully described, we will pass to the start. The lock man came to us as before, and we sent him off to return at twelve o'clock. Our first lock was No. 82, Beenham, just outside which we had passed the night.

The heat during the Tuesday following Whit Monday was, if anything (at least on the canal), as severe as it was the two previous days, and our arms and legs got so sore that it was extremely painful to expose them to the sun further. To steer the boat, as we were travelling from east to west, the sun was beating in on us on the port side practically the whole day, and it was almost impossible to escape it, as one hand at least had to be on the steering wheel the whole time. In fact, after a time it was impossible to keep the left arm on the wheel, and one was obliged to place the right arm across to steer with until that got too painful. Eventually we tried rigging up a shelter, but that was not very successful either.

To continue our journey, as mentioned before, our first lock was No. 82, Beenham. The reach between there and Hamstead, No. 81, was quite good. We had thought that now we were on the canal proper, where the water was stiller, we should get much worse weeds between each lock, but this was not so. Some reaches were very bad indeed as will be stated, whereas in others one could use the engine and get

along satisfactorily. We ran with the engine up to Hamstead and passed through that, but the engine was not going as it should do. We passed through Hamstead and proceeded into the next reach which we should have been able to have covered without trouble from weeds had it been otherwise possible. The engine, however, was over-heating and was missing, so half-way up the reach we decided to stop, take out the sparking plugs, and clean them as we thought this might be the cause of the trouble. This we did and gave her some more oil, and after replacing the plugs we tried everything possible, but could not re-start the engine at all. There was nothing else, therefore, but to get out the tow-line and have the boat towed until we could reach some village, or point, where we could engage some expert to discover the trouble with our engine. We therefore towed up to Copse Lock, No. 80, the lockman and our young man towing the boat. The greater part of this we should have managed with the help of the engine, although the top reach between Hamstead and Copse, and between Copse and Drewitts, No. 79, there were patches of weeds in places, but not worse than we had experienced, or such that it would have been impossible to have used the engine by cleaning off the weeds when necessary. We passed into Drewitt's Lock, and there the lock keeper, who had come with us from the start in the morning, left us and handed us over to the man who had the next reach in his charge. After passing out of Drewitt's Lock, we came into one of the best reaches on the canal. At this point the Kennet is again canalised ; the reach is about two miles long and is deep without a weed in it. When we came out of Drewitt's Lock, we decided that we would once more try to get the engine to run. With difficulty we got the boat into the side just above a weir where the water passes over and back into the Kennet. This is situate just outside the lock. At this place there is a good stream running, and we were frightened that we should be drawn up against the weir. Having cleaned the propeller and the propeller shaft, the lock keeper pushed us out into the stream for us to start our engine, but he forgot to hand us the boat-hook. He pushed us with sufficient strength to send us across to the other side where there was deep water ; but not having any boat-hook, we could not hold on. He then tried to throw the boat-hook across the stream to us, but it

landed short and the point stuck in the middle of the stream. There was a good current running, the weir was close behind us, and the boat-hook was stuck in the middle of the stream. We only had the paddle to hold the boat up with from going down over the weir, and we had to get the boat-hook somehow. We paddled the boat out into the stream, and were within a few inches of reaching the boat-book when it suddenly released its hold from the bottom, popped up into the stream, and started to flow down towards the weir. There was nothing else for us to do but to follow it, and this we did, eventually catching it up but not many yards from the weir. We then had to paddle the boat and get back to the far bank. By super-human efforts we managed to do it and hung on with the boat hook to the bank while again we tried to start the engine. We turned the handle until we were completely exhausted, but the result was nil. We could not get a "kick" out of her. We therefore decided there was no hope for it but we must tow up this reach as far as Kintbury, where we were told we should possibly get some engineer to help us put the engine in order again. We were now on the opposite side to the tow-path, and we had to get across the stream to land our young man and get the tow line ashore. We were not very far from the weir and we had already used great endeavours to escape it. However, by following up the bank with the paddle, using our mop as a pole, and using the boat-hook to keep her in the side, we got the boat sufficiently away from the weir to enable us to paddle across to the far side with safety. Having accomplished this, the rest was easy, and we were able to sit peacefully in the boat and be pulled along up this beautiful reach which would have been a great pleasure to have sailed up with our engine working. However, it was peaceful and the reach was exceptionally pretty, although it must have been very hard work for those towing. The lockman, our young man and two or three boys pulled us along. Of these parts of the canal we passed through, this Kintbury Reach was one of the most attractive. Many other parts of the canal are beautiful, but they have as often as not other detractions, such as weeds, mud banks, etc. The Kintbury Reach however is ideal in every way. It is deep water and partially overgrown in places. While on the subject of scenery, we should mention that some we passed through

after leaving Beenham Lock was also pretty. The reach between Hamstead and Copse is one which should not be passed without comment ; the south side being beautifully wooded and the tributaries of the Kennet coming through into the canal under over-hanging trees, with the sun shining through these on to the water giving an exceptionally beautiful effect. Copse Lock, as its name denotes, is built on the side of a wood and the trees cover this lock, placing it in the shade, which was most welcome on a burning day such as the Tuesday after Whitsun. In this account of our journeyings, descriptions of scenery have not been fully dealt with. We are endeavouring to give an account to place on record the happenings during the trip. Space will not permit to expand very fully on scenery which we passed through, some of it was exceptionally fine and one could, no doubt, write long descriptions which relate to the scenery alone. Parts of the canal, of course, are bare and most unattractive, but parts, on the other hand, are very much the reverse. Where we get into exceptionally beautiful places mention will be made.

We will now return to the journey. We were passing up the reach through Drewitt's Lock, No. 79, to Kintbury Lock, No. 78, with assistance from the tow-path. We arrived at Kintbury Lock which is adjoining the village of Kintbury, beside the railway station. Our first duty there was to find the nearest garage. This was about half-a-mile or so distant, and we sent to ask somebody to come and help us as soon as possible. It took a little time, but eventually a most competent engineer arrived. Some of our party went off to the hotel to procure some tea and boiled eggs, since time was drawing on and we were getting hungry. The garage engineer took the carburetter to pieces, tested the plugs and generally gave a good overhaul. We found that two of the plugs were ineffective and with these being replaced and the carburettor cleaned out, the engine ran again without much trouble. A halt at Kintbury of about one-and-a-half hours was made. We filled up with food and stores, including a tin of much needed methylated spirit and at this point also we met a Mr. Chivers, who had spent a great many years of the earlier part of his life on this waterway during the time when it was in constant use, and he knew the same thoroughly. We therefore engaged him from that point to see us through as far as the other side of the summit level, to help us tow the

boat, and help with locks, swing bridges, etc. We found his assistance was invaluable and he gave us much valuable information as to the length of reaches, where bridges were situated and other points. We left Kintbury about six o'clock and we had perforce to pass Hungerford that night since we had made arrangements to call for our correspondence at the Bear Hotel, Hungerford, that day. We were then some three-and-a-half miles from Hungerford, and had it been possible to use the engine the whole of the way, we should have got there very comfortably. From Kintbury up to Brunsdon's, No. 77, we managed to get along with the engine, but only with difficulty, and we decided after reaching Brunsdon Lock that we should do very much better by having the boat towed than by going only perhaps a hundred yards and continually stopping to clean the propeller. We therefore gave up using the engine and we towed the boat with the help of Mr. Chivers, the lock keeper, and our young man from Brunsdon, No. 77, through Wire Lock, No. 76, up to No. 75, Dunn's Mill. After passing Dunn's mill, however, to our great joy, we found that the weeds had recently been cut and we had a nice stretch of water in front of us. Once more we were able to start the engine and we ran in great style up to the outskirts of Hungerford. Just short of Hungerford, however, we met with a swing bridge which, doubtless, had not been opened for a long time. The bridge caused our assistants on the bank and many others who had collected to help us considerable trouble, but it was opened at last, and we passed through it and ran in under Hungerford Bridge, which carries the main road. We pulled up here and landed, walking down to the Bear Hotel, about a quarter-of-a-mile distant, where we collected our letters, which were waiting for us, and visited the bar. Never was liquid more favourably received. We did not forget our assistants, however, who had done the lion share of the work on the tow-path, and we brought back with us some bottled refreshments. We called on some relations who lived at Hungerford, but we were not received with any great excitement. It no doubt was just their dinner time when they did not want to be troubled with some tramps at that time of the day, so we pushed ahead to find our next camping place. People were again passing up the tow-path to watch us, and we had to shake them off. We passed through Hungerford Lock, No.

74, and another swing bridge as far as the tail end of Hungerford Marsh Lock. We could not find a very satisfactory place, but we managed to fix up at the side of a big common away from the tow-path. The hour was getting late and we were again fully tired, so that we did not waste more time than possible in getting ourselves ready for the night. The weather had now made a change and from the heat we had passed through in the day, a wind was blowing cold and hollow. We therefore let down our outside curtains and did our cooking on the boat, not taking the stove in to the shore. This was attended with complete success and this was really more comfortable than getting the stove out on the land. Our young man was dispatched to go and fix himself up at Hungerford and arrangements were made for Mr. Chivers to meet us next morning at eleven-thirty. The dog was fed and put to bed, and soon we had our curtains down and fixed up for sleep.

This, perhaps, was the worst place during the trip where we camped since it was such open exposed country, and there were so many people about, but we managed to pass through it successfully. Next morning we were left comparatively in peace except for a party of weed-cutters on the stream adjoining the canal, and that night it was so late that the people soon cleared off to go to their own homes and bed.

CHAPTER V

THE RISE TO SUMMIT LEVEL—MORE ASSISTANCE—THE CROFTON PUMPING STATION—FURTHER WEEDS—SAVERNAKE TUNNEL—A BEAUTIFUL CAMPING STATION

The next day dawned dull and the wind still blew. It is not easy to cook the breakfast in the boat since, as narrated in our earlier part of this narrative, one of the party is getting the boat ready for breakfast while the other is cooking it. The stove had, therefore, to come off, but owing to the wind it gave considerable trouble to get even the kettle to boil, and necessitated our taking it to pieces afterwards to clean it. Eventually we got some hot breakfast, and all the rest having been accomplished, we moved off about eleven-forty-five that morning. The wind later died down, and it came out quite hot again. Too hot to be pleasant in many places, especially for our sun-burnt arms.

That day we accomplished ten miles, and passed through nineteen locks, including Savernake Tunnel, details of which will be given later. Taking into consideration the great number of locks this was our longest day's journey during the trip. Our new lockman came to see us early, and we, as usual, gave him the cue as to our probable time of starting. We have omitted to say, however, that the lockman who picked us up, in the last chapter, at No. 79 Drewitts, and who threw our boat hook to stick in the middle and bottom of the stream, came right through with us to the tail of No. 73 Hungerford Marsh, and helped to tow our boat most of the way, a total distance of five miles. He on leaving us had to get home by train. All the lock keepers worked hard for us, but it is probable this man had harder work to do than any of them, and right well he did it too. As mentioned, we got away on this Wednesday morning about eleven-forty-five, Mr. Chivers having re-joined us from Kintbury, cycling up

from there to Hungerford that morning. Possibly the reason why we made better progress on this day was due to the fact that we had far more assistance than any other day during our trip. We had the Company's lock-keeper, and for the first portion of the journey, in addition to Mr. Chivers, one of the Company's men from the weed-cutting gang came through for more than half the distance. Therefore, in addition to our own young man, whom we brought to help us with locks, bridges, etc., we had two of the Company's men and Mr. Chivers as well.

Again, for a great part of this journey, we were able to get along with the engine, in fact, most of the reaches, until we got to the summit level, were clear of weeds. The reason why we had two of the Company's men was due to the fact that from Hungerford to Crofton there are a great number of locks, and some of these locks require extra assistance to open them. Many of the locks between Hungerford and Crofton are in a bad condition. Many of them will have to be seriously tackled in the early future if the Company intend to keep open this waterway for the use of traffic. It is not known what the rise from Hungerford to Crofton top lock is, but considering there are nineteen locks, it must be considerable, roughly one could calculate about two hundred feet rise. Our first reach from Hungerford Marsh to Cobblers No. 72 we managed satisfactorily with the engine, but from Cobblers through to No. 71 Picketfield, to Froxfield Bottom, No. 70, we met with bad weeds, and were obliged to get out the towline and have the boat pulled through this distance. From Froxfield Bottom through to Froxfield Middle, No. 69, Oakhill No. 68 up to Little Bedwyn No. 67, the reaches were quite good, and we got along in first-rate style. At this point we passed beside the canal a motor car which was drawn up near the stream, running close parallel with the canal, but at a lower level. After we had proceeded for another half-mile or so we happened to mention the name to our lock keeper of the general manager of the Great Western Railway, Sir Felix J. C. Pole. It was then that we were informed that we had a short time passed his motor car. Had it been at all possible we would have turned the boat and gone back since we should have liked to offer our salutations to Sir Felix and have personally thanked him for all the Company had done for us in granting us faciltiies and for

their assistance in helping us through the canal so far. We felt sad that we had missed this opportunity, not only to personally thank Sir Felix for his help to us in this matter, but also to congratulate him at the same time on his recovery from his recent serious operation, and express the hope that he had returned once more to his full health and vigour.

At Little Bedwyn we stopped for a short time while one of the party went to the nearest farm house to purchase some eggs and get our water jar re-filled. Our next locks were No. 66 Little Bedwyn Field, followed by Burnt-Mills No. 65, and Great Bedwyn Church No. 64. Through all this distance the canal was in good order in so far that we were able to get along without being troubled by weeds, and although the locks in many places were bad, with the assistance we had on shore, no long delays occurred. At Great Bedwyn Church, No. 64, the lock keeper and the assistant who had come with us from Hungerford Marsh, bade us good-bye, and we were taken over by the lock keeper of the next reach, who piloted us through the long series of locks, known as Crofton. Here we have locks numbering from 55 to 63, nine in all, all under Crofton. These locks are only a few hundred yards apart, and passing through them consisted of coming out of one about five minutes run with the engine, and getting ready for the next. In fact, the day was almost made up of passing through locks. Eventually we got to Lock No. 55, and this point possibly is the most important place on the Kennet and Avon Canal, since this is a top level lock, and after summit level is passed, the canal begins to drop towards Bath. Before reaching Lock No. 55, i.e., Crofton Top Lock, is situated the Pumping Station and the Reservoir, which supplies this canal with water. The reservoir, which is of very large capacity, is served by streams and rivers collected from the high lands lying towards Salisbury Plain on the South, and this reservoir is situated so that it can by gravitation, supply the canal on the Newbury side, and so far as we could ascertain, was the source of the supply of water to the canal, at any rate as far is Kintbury, where the river Kennet is partially canalised. The supply, however, for the top level, that is from Crofton No. 55, as far as Wootton Rivers No. 54, and from this for the whole of the canal, at any rate as far as Seend, and the water wheel at Claverton, is supplied by the Pumping Station at Crofton. Unfortunately when

we arrived at the Pumping Station it was after five o'clock, and the engineers in charge had left, the same being closed. Otherwise our lock keeper informed us that he would have been pleased to have allowed us to look over this which would undoubtedly have been of considerable interest, since the engines which were put in when the canal was made, over one hundred years ago are still working, being one of the few old Beam engines still existing in this country. Possibly if some day we make a return journey back to the River Thames, the opportunity might then present itself for us to look inside this pumping station. Two locks before you get into the Crofton top lock, you pass through a very deep reach which reach can be supplied by the reservoir mentioned before. From this reach there is a conduit deep down underground, which leads under the pumping station, and the water from this reach, which is kept supplied from the reservoir, is raised by pumps into an open channel, which flows by gravitation into the far side of Crofton top lock. We have said, that taking it as a whole, from Hungerford Marsh up to Crofton top lock, the weeds were not bad, but on emerging out of Crofton top lock the canal made up for its kindness by presenting us with the worst patch of weed we had met during the whole of the trip. Even with towing we could not see how we were going to get through it; there was not a space of a yard square where water was visible; one might have been looking on some derelict field. However, we had proceeded so far, and we had to go on; so all hands on shore, except the steersman, to get us through this mass of weed. By violent exertions we, however, managed it. The weed extended from Crofton top lock in this condition right up to within a few yards of Savernake Tunnel. Our boat is not like a barge, since having the propeller underneath it, the weeds cling to this and you collect more and more the further you go. As we passed through this patch we were dragging out by the roots yards and yards of the Company's weeds, and it is a wonder that the tow-line stood the strain or the stanchion on which the tow-line was fixed was not pulled out. We should have said that at Crofton top lock No. 55 the lock-keeper bade us good-bye, and we cannot continue this narrative without a word about our last lock keeper, full of reminiscences and jocular tales, for fifty years in the Company's service. It was

a delight for us to be addressed once more in the broad Wiltshire dialect, which he possessed to a marked degree. We were now left with our own party, and Mr. Chivers to struggle through these weeds as best we could. It must have been terribly hard work for those on shore, but they managed to get us through eventually, and as soon as we were into water again we had to bring the boat alongside to get these weeds off, which we had torn up, and were hanging on to the propeller. It took us a good half-an-hour to get them off. We tore away handful after handful and threw them on to the shore until there was a big heap. Our next adventure was to pass through Savernake Tunnel, and we were most particular that everything was in first rate order before we ventured through this portion of the waterway. We therefore took extra pains to see that the weed was cleared from our propeller and shaft, and also that the weed, when removed, was thrown on shore, and was not allowed to float about near the boat. All at last was ready, we got on board, started the engine, and pushed off into mid-stream. We got her in a good position, pointing straight for the mouth of the tunnel, through which at the far end we could see a speck of light about the size of a pigeon's egg. Through Savernake Tunnel was undoubtedly the most interesting of the whole trip, and we viewed the experience of passing through this with much excitement. Through the tunnel there is, of course, no weeds, and there was a good depth of water. It was a most uncanny experience. When once inside the sound of the engine, which in the open air is not oppressive, created a roar. We had to steer by keeping the light straight ahead, and when once well inside the tunnel, it was not possible to see the engine controls. We had, therefore to arrange these by feeling. We were naturally somewhat nervous that the engine might let us down half-way through, and had this happened we should have been in unpleasant circumstances. The tunnel is between a quarter and a half-mile long, so that if the engine had broken down after we had proceeded only a short distance, we should have had to paddle the boat through the whole of the length, which would have taken us a very long time, and would have been very hard work. In fact, it would have been for other reasons most difficult to have got the boat through without the engine. There is no reason to dwell on this since the engine

did her work well, and we went through the tunnel in first rate form. It was most interesting as we got near the end and the light got larger to gradually emerge out once more into daylight, and the sound of the engine from being a roar became almost still. For anybody to make this trip it is worth doing alone simply to pass through Savernake Tunnel, since it is an event very few people now living can have experienced. After passing through the tunnel the canal is in a deep cutting overhung by trees on both sides. We have mentioned previously beautiful parts of the canal, especially the Kintbury reach and others, but there is nowhere on this part of the canal which is quite so unique or attractive as that portion of it, which lies just beyond Savernake Tunnel towards Bath.

The hour was now late, and after proceeding some quarter of a mile beyond the tunnel, we decided we could not possibly find a more attractive place to spend the night, so we brought the boat alongside and tied her up for the evening. Of all the places where we spent a night during Part I of our trip, this was the most attractive and the most pleasant spot. We were not so late that evening, nor were we so tired since beyond the bad patch of weeds we met with outside Crofton top lock, we had not been so seriously troubled with these abominations.

Before, however, we turned in for the night, we had to pay off Mr. Chivers, who had come through with us from Hungerford. Not having sufficient change for this purpose we had to walk back a mile-and-a-half to the Savernake Hotel to procure this, and at the same time to again have our water jar re-filled. This was accomplished after some trouble with the Hotel manager over breaking up a five-pound-note for a party he no doubt took to be a tramp from the road. Anyway, we returned to find some of the party had already lit the stove, but unfortunately as they had never handled this before, and the wicks had not been re-placed correctly, no result had been achieved. Before long, however, the kettle boiled, and supper was served in the most delightful and pleasant surroundings. Before turning in that night we went for a stroll along the tow-path up this beautiful reach. Eventually we got aboard when too dark to see more, and soon passed into the realms of slumber for the last night of Part I of this narrative. Next day we were due back home,

and we had planned to take our boat as far as Messrs. Robbins, Lane and Pinnigar's place at Honeystreet Wharf, leaving her there until later when we should continue our journey to Bristol and Part II of this narrative will come to be written.

CHAPTER VI

A WINDY MORNING—WOOTTON RIVERS LOCKS—ATTRACTIONS OF PEWSEY—HONEY STREET WHARF—MR. LANE'S HOSPITALITY—BOAT IS LEFT—HOME AGAIN

The next morning found a complete change in the weather, unfortunately ; the wind had veered round to the north-east, and it blew hard, feeling horribly cold after the warm days we had experienced. It quite spoilt the last morning of our pilgrimage, and we were glad to put on extra clothing. It made the cooking of breakfast again very difficult. This was eventually accomplished somehow, but it was really too cold to shave, and so for that day we went without that luxury. We were packed up and away in good time for us, moving off about eleven-thirty. We had nine miles to do, and then to get back home again after we had cleared the boat and put her away. In this nine miles we only had four locks to negotiate, however, and these were down, not up, which are quicker to get through. We had passed the night on the summit level, i.e., from Crofton top lock No. 55 to Wootton Rivers top Lock No. 54, a distance of two miles. Soon after starting we passed out of the beautiful cutting in which we had spent the night, into more open and exposed country. Here we met the full force of the wind, which was blowing a gale behind us. This would not have been so bad if there had been no locks to negotiate, but it is not much catch to be blown violently into a lock gate, or blown violently into a lock that is open to crash the bottom gate. During the trip we never had so much trouble with locks as here. There are only four at Wootton Rivers, Nos. 54, 53, 52, and 51, but these locks opened badly, and to keep back with the wind behind was difficult work. The wind was so strong that even reversing the engine we hardly stood still. The lock keeper was awaiting us at No. 54, and we went through here fairly well. It was No. 53 where we had most

trouble, as he kept us outside for so long, having to fill the lock twice before he could manipulate the top gate, and then we had to land our assistant to help. We then sent our assistant to get ready Lock No. 51 for us, leaving the lock keeper to manage No. 52 ; but again he had to wait till our young man came back before he could get the top gate to open to let us in. Eventually we passed No. 52, and No. 51 was all ready for us, with the top gate open ; so we were through that quickly. We were now more sheltered from the wind, and no more locks in front of us. From Wootton Rivers Bottom Lock to Honeystreet we hardly saw a weed. The engine was set going, and we fairly sped along to Pewsey Wharf, a distance of three miles, without slackening speed. We fed as we went. This was a dull and uninteresting part of the canal ; but what a change when we reached Pewsey, another beauty spot ! For a mile we passed under over-hanging trees, and under some remarkably finely-constructed and decorated bridges ; one stone bridge in particular just beyond Pewsey, being a gem and a work of art. We should no doubt have proceeded down to Honeystreet without a stop had we not met two swing bridges, abominations which we thought we had left behind for good. These took a great deal of trouble and time to open, which necessitated the whole party landing to get them to swing. The last of them refused to move more than half-way, but we just managed to squeeze through. After that our engine began again to give trouble, but we had not far to go, only about another mile. We had trouble to start her up after the last swing bridge, and we crawled into Honeystreet Wharf, the last mile, on only three cylinders. So at last about six o'clock we drew up alongside Mr. Lane's wharf. We got on his telephone at once and asked for our car to be sent over to fetch us, and to come as soon as possible, together with a light van for our stores, etc. We returned to the boat and began to make all safe, and land all stores to be sent back home. All being accomplished, the boat pumped out, curtains let and tied down, we hastened to Mr. Lane's house where we were most hospitably received and entertained with a gorgeous tea. We must have presented a sight for the blind—one member unshaven, black from head to foot and very sparsely clad. Still, we apologised ; we fed and were given plenty of excellent tea. We had a wash and tidy up ; then

the cars arrived. As soon as the van was loaded we climbed into the driving seat of the car which seemed strange after the driving seat of the boat, and in half-an-hour's time we were back in Calne and back home. Then for a hot dinner, cooked by somebody else, a hot bath with some soda in it, and as Mr. Pepys used to say, "so to bed," once again between sheets, but feeling that we were being stifled to death with a roof on top of us. So we will bring to a close a part of our trip through the Kennet and Avon Canal, to follow this up at some later date with a further part of this narrative from Honeystreet Wharf to Bristol. We commenced at Reading some fifty miles from Calne, and finished only twelve miles from Calne. All of us were, perhaps, sorry to return again to civilisation, and amongst us all none more so than the dog. She knows these excursions and enjoys them. As mentioned earlier, although possibly no great help, she is never a hindrance, since she knows exactly what is expected of her by day and by night. Every routine of the journey comes as clock-work to her. While we waited for our car at Mr. Lane's, she sat outside. When the car arrived, she waited not for us any longer, since directly the door opened she stepped inside to await our coming out, sitting in her accustomed seat. To those who have read this account of our trip so far we will wish adieu for the present, asking you to continue with us later when we come to relate to you the remainder of this journey through this ancient and little used waterway created by our forefathers some hundred and more years ago.

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CHAPTER VII

WE MOVE FROM HONEYSTREET—DEVIZES OF TWENTY-NINE LOCKS—A SUNDAY AFTERNOON REPOSE—HEAVY RAIN—THE "BARGE" INN, SEEND—A FURTHER INTERLUDE

To those who have read the early part of this account of our trip through the Kennet and Avon Navigation and Canal, it will be remembered we left our boat at Messrs. Robins, Lane and Pinnigers' place, Honeystreet Wharf, where we were most hospitably received and looked after by Mr. Lane. We arrived there on June 15th, and the boat remained in Mr. Lane's charge until Saturday, July 7th. During that time we took the opportunity to have the engine overhauled, and several other defects in the transmission remedied. We went over occasionally to take her out for a trip on this length, which runs from Wootton Rivers bottom Lock No. 51, to Devizes top Lock No. 50, for fifteen miles without a lock.

In all we took her out five times—twice towards Pewsey and three times towards Devizes.

As the summer was advancing so the weeds continued to grow—these trips, therefore, on each occasion gave more trouble from these. In the meantime one of our party made a trip on Mr Lane's barge, which had been down to Bristol for a load of timber, and passed through a large part of the long chain of locks, below Devizes, Nos. 50 to 22 inclusive.

This experience decided us that it would not be time ill spent to get our boat through these before we continued our trip to Bath and Bristol, since it is a matter of from four to five hours' hard work to get through these Devizes locks.

At a last moment's decision, therefore, on Saturday, July 7th, we decided to motor over from home and proceed with the boat as far as Devizes, one of the party going with us by road in a motor car.

We left home at one o'clock that day, reaching Honeystreet

about two o'clock, after picking up some more fuel and oil, and prepared the boat for a further journey. We went to Mr. Lane, bidding him good-bye, and all our best thanks for his hospitality, kindness and guardianship of the boat. We pushed off about three o'clock, and having started the engine, proceeded for about half-a-mile, when we again met weeds which clogged our propeller. It was therefore decided to tow ; but we had hardly been towing one hundred yards, when, rounding the corner, we met the Company's weed cutting barge. Beyond this the weeds had been cut ; there was a broad expanse of deep water. We tied up to the barge and cleared our propeller, re-started the engine and proceeded peacefully and comfortably on our way, doing about eight knots.

We kept this up for about a mile, when we met another swing bridge which necessitated a halt ; still we were able to proceed comfortably with our engine past two more swing bridges as far as Horton Bridge and some way beyond, the last part of which was quite attractive. Then began our troubles again and we passed into a very bad patch of this canal for about three-quarters-of-a-mile before reaching Devizes. Here the canal was covered with duck weed, which no doubt we could have passed through slowly had it not been for the fact that hidden under this duck weed were masses of clotted blanket weed, which directly we hit, stopped the boat dead. Time after time we got this off, restarted, and were pulled up again in a few seconds ; lastly the rudder hit a large mass of this weed under water, the steering wheel was knocked round out of our grasp, and the steering cable snapped. We at once went straight into the bank with a nasty bump. Most luckily for us, we have alternative steering by fixing a hand-tiller, or the trip would have had to stop here.

In any case, it was useless to try and proceed further with the engine, so we again got out the tow-line and continued towards Devizes. So we passed the back of the Barracks, at Devizes, until we reached the bridge over the canal carrying the road to Coate. Here we were met by the member of our party who had gone by road, called a halt to feed and particularly to drink. We spent half-an-hour here, and then cleaning off our propeller again, restarted the engine. It was, however, no good ; the same conditions prevailed ; a resort again being made to towing. Not, however, for far,

luckily, when we reached the bridge carrying the main London road, Devizes-Beckhampton, the canal appeared better ; so we brought the tow-line aboard, cleaned up as usual, and started the engine.

Conditions were better. We got along first-rate through that part passing the back of Devizes until we reached the first of the Devizes locks, No. 50, easily beating the car which had to go by road through Devizes town. A halt was called here to inquire for the Company's wharf, where we were advised by Mr. Lane to put the boat up for that night. Nobody seemed to have heard of it, we were in a rather slum neighbourhood, and were anxious to get on if we had to go on. At last somebody arrived who was able to inform us that to get to this wharf we had to pass through six locks. The hour was getting on and it would take some time to get through, especially as we were alone with no lock-keepers to help us.

There was nothing else to do as we would not leave the boat there ; so we made all haste we could ; one to work the locks and the other the boat through them. For the first six locks there is a stretch of water between each of about two-hundred yards, so she had to be towed and steered between each. Single-handed, with only one on shore to work the locks and tow the boat between each, took us a long time. It was exceptionally hard work, especially as everything was being done at lightning speed. Let us detail what this actually means going down the locks and not up ; the latter being double the labour. First a lock is always left with its top gate shut, empty. Hence when you arrive you first have to go to the far end of the lock to close the bottom paddles and the bottom gates. Next return to the top gates, open the paddle on one side, then cross over the gates and open the paddle on the other side. You have a moment's respite while the lock fills. Directly it is full, open the top gates, guide and help the boat in, close the top gates ; let down the top gate paddles both sides, which means crossing over again, pass to the bottom gate and open both paddles ; again wait while the lock empties, open the bottom gates, guide and help the boat out. Then to get out the tow line and tow her to the next lock where the whole performance starts *de novo*. It is not necessary to weary the reader with a description of each lock passed through ;

suffice that when at last we had accomplished the sixth and last, and when the boat was at last fixed up to the Company's Wharf with the curtains let down, it was past ten o'clock. Right glad we were to devour some cider that our helper from the land had brought us. A long walk back to our waiting car, and so home again, after arranging to return next day to get through the remaining Devizes locks, twenty-nine in all, Nos. 22 to 50 inclusive, of which at that time we had actually accomplished six, leaving twenty-three more to pass through.

The next day was Sunday, July 8th, and at about three o'clock we returned to the boat where we had left her the night before, i.e., tied up to the Company's Wharf above Lock No. 44. We were now ready to start that long chain of locks, Nos. from 44 to 22 inclusive, which run down parallel with the Bath road, leading from Devizes to Melksham, and that part known as Caen Hill.

These locks are so close together that when you pass out of one it is only about a lock's length to the top gate of the next.

We left our car at the foot of Caen Hill and walked up to the top lock where our boat was situated. Between each of these locks there has been dug out to the north side compensation ponds, without measurement one would judge one hundred yards by fifty yards. These are necessary especially for craft ascending, as the space between each lock would not contain in itself sufficient water to fill the lock below. These ponds start above Lock No. 44 and finish at above Lock No. 26. The top pond has been used by the Company for wharfage purposes, and it was in this top pond that our boat was situate.

Having reached her at last after a long walk up the hill, we soon had her curtains rolled up and her ready for the journey. It was not necessary to have anybody in the boat for these locks, so close together, and all help was required on shore. So we tied the towline to her nose, and having paddled her across this top pond, soon got busy getting the first lock ready. The passage of a descending craft through one of these locks has been fully described in our previous day's exploits, so we need not again weary the reader. However, if the reader would prefer to open and close eighteen locks in succession without a break or a halt, one feels sure that he or she would be far more wearied at the end of them than by

reading about each. Still we will pass on. Anyway we had come suitably attired for the job—light canvas shoes, grey flannel trousers and a tennis shirt. We refer to only the male portion of the party. We cannot say what the female portion had on, excepting only the outside covering. Anyway it looked cool. Besides, the males did the work of opening and closing paddles and lock gates. The females brought the boat out from one lock to the next and looked after her while the lock lowered. By-the-bye, the dog stayed at home. We had completed about a quarter of these locks ourselves when the Company's inspector came to us, saying that we should, or ought to have, the lockmen to help us. We assured him that we could manage quite well ourselves ; but he went away, and when we had managed something over half, two lockmen arrived. Thence it was much better and we sent on the female portion of the party to prepare tea for us beside Lock No. 27. We started No. 44 soon after three o'clock and we passed No. 27 just about five-thirty. Glad we were for a cup of tea. It was very hard work and we were consumed with a mighty thirst.

We settled here for half-an-hour, and at six o'clock we re-embarked. The ladies of the party then went home. One was to come out again later with the car to pick us up at Seend Station at seven-thirty or thereabouts. Lock No. 27 is not the end of the Devizes chain of locks, but it is the end of the locks which lie close together with the compensation ponds between. From there we had five more locks to get through, but these are further apart—getting further as one goes through each. For the first two we towed the boat, and as we had the lockmen with us, one stayed on board. After the second lock, No. 25, we were able to start up our engine, and this we did for the reason that it had started to rain and we preferred to drive her than tow her. For the last three of these locks it rained heavily, but the water was deep and quite free from weeds. About six-thirty we passed through Lock No. 22, and we had finished the twenty-nine locks comprising the Devizes series. Unfortunately, just outside this last it was a little weedy, so we drew up under the railway bridge out of the rain and cleaned her. From this point we were clear of weed, and we put the engine at full speed ahead. We raced down the next reach under the main Bath road, Devizes-Melksham, in clear water, under Seend

village, until we were pulled up with a swing bridge. It rained hard ; but the bridge had to be opened, so we ran up to the bank and landed. The bridge opened quite easily, and we re-embarked the other member of the crew, getting properly weeded again in doing so. There are always weeds close to the shore if not in the centre. However we cleaned off, and got well-away again. Round the next bend another swing bridge. We cursed at having to land again, as it was still raining hard. Just beyond this was Lock No. 21, the first of the Seend locks, so that one of the party who opened the bridge was left to walk to the lock where we had already drawn up ready to get to work. Luckily for us, the lock-keeper lived beside this lock, No. 21, and he came out and helped us. The rain had slackened now but it was very wet underfoot. With the help of the lock keeper we passed through and under the road bridge leading from Seend Station to the hamlet on the hill. We had only about one hundred yards before reaching No. 20, and we ran the engine down to this, the lock keeper and our own helper coming down the towpath. We had just pulled up outside the lock when we heard a shout behind and there was the other member of the party with the car on the bridge we had just passed under amply provided with mackintoshes for us. However, we were wet and were not very keen to don them, the weather being warm. We told the car it was on the wrong bridge and would have to retrieve its steps by Seend Station, take the first to its left, and meet us at the next bridge by the Barge Inn. There we had planned to leave the boat under the charge of Mr. Pike until we again re-started the trip to Bath and Bristol. We went through Lock No. 20 without mishap, and again with engine passed to No. 19, also only about one hundred yards. No comment is required here. We were soon through, and in a few yards lay the Barge Inn. We ran in alongside the back of Mr. Pike's house, made her secure, let down the curtains, took off our bedding, cushions and everything not required on the boat, all of which we handed over to the safe keeping of Mrs. Pike, with instructions for the bedding to be dried. The car was waiting us ; so having made all secure, and the car driver having again produced four bottles of cider, they disappeared in quick time. It was now eight-thirty, so all-aboard the car and back home to change, feed and sleep.

The next part of our narrative will be a continuance of the tale with all on board including the dog. This Chapter VII. is only an interlude which covers getting the boat through Devizes Locks, so that we should not have these in front of us when we continued our journey proper. Without Chapter VII, however, there would have been a distance of thirteen miles unaccounted for of this trip, and in writing this tale we are placing on record every distance we cover and every lock passed through from Reading to Bristol.

PART II

INTRODUCTION

Before commencing to detail the continuance of our journey through this waterway, created by our forebears some one hundred and eighteen years ago, there are some points to be firstly mentioned.

Number one of these is that when writing Part I., and giving the heading to this narrative, it mentions in some places from Reading to Bath. We should now like to denote an alteration here since the narrative will cover from Reading to Bristol Bridge.

Number two has reference to a certain factor which will make Part II. somewhat on different lines to Part I. In Part I. those who have read so far will have noticed that chapters have been divided into travelling days ; that is to say, that each day's journey formed a chapter of itself, except, perhaps, the movement from Honeystreet Wharf to Seend Wharf, which was only an interlude in the trip being arranged by motor journeys from home and back the same night and taking up two afternoons.

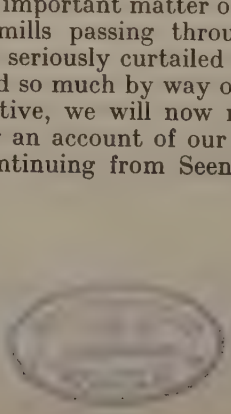
During Part I. the writer took the Whitsun holiday and three days. The movement being made to get the boat through the canal as far as possible in that time. During Part II. the writer was enjoying his annual holiday of fourteen days, so that time was never the essence of the contract, and there was on no occasion any hurry to proceed with the journey, and we moved more or less as the spirit moved us. We remained, at any rate, without movement on Sundays, or if we moved those days it was not through any lock or any great distance.

Therefore chapters will no longer denote distances covered or locks passed through. As a matter of fact, we only had eighteen more locks to pass through from Seend Wharf to Hanham ; twelve of these on the canal and six on the River Avon.

Number three has reference to scenery which is brought into this introductionary chapter since it is a thing apart, and cannot be dealt with by the account of daily journeyings. Scenery on this canal has been mentioned in Part I., and different places have been referred to such as Savernake, round about the Kintbury reach, and the River Kennet, before one reaches Newbury. Nothing in any of these, however, can compare with the scenery of this canal from Bradford-on-Avon to Bath, or correctly at any rate as far as the Dundas aqueduct. The scenery through this part of the canal surpasses anything the pen of the writer of this article can adequately describe. The valley of the Avon that the canal passes along, through Limpley Stoke, is in itself very beautiful; but the canal passing along and high up the hillside being completely buried in woods, is par excellence. On one side of the canal is the high cliff, and on the other far below is the valley with the Avon passing through it, marred to some extent, no doubt, by the exigencies of modern travel, since the railway has chosen the same valley to lay its iron road and to fill the valley with its hideous noise of roaring expresses and screaming whistles. One feels sure that when the Creator made the valley of the Avon from Bradford to Bathampton He intended it for the use only of the river and the canal. The engineers who made our canals must have been very wonderful people. They were the pioneers of the laying out of levels minutely accurate in every respect. The canal between Bradford-on-Avon and Bath is an exceptionally fine piece of engineering work. It passes from Bradford-on-Avon down the left side of the valley, then passes over the river to the right side at Avoncliff, over the Avoncliff Aqueduct. Three miles further it again crosses the valley to the left bank of the Avon, over the Dundas Aquaduct, eighty feet above the river and the railway, which has since pushed its way through both these aqueducts. Both these are very fine pieces of engineering work, most especially the latter, being beautifully decorated Box stone bridges of magnificent proportions. Fourthly and lastly, one might say here that it is a matter of some surprise that our forebears, who engineered this canal, did not canalise the Avon further than they did beyond Bath. One would have thought that it would have been cheaper and less difficult to have used the Avon in the same way that the Kennet has been used below

Hungerford. It is understood that this was intended as far as Bradford-on-Avon, but that the millowners (important people in those days, since most of the cloth of England was made on the mills of the Bristol Avon) and the landowners were too strong for the promoters of the canal. It would have seemed possible to have used the Avon even much further on the line of the old Wilts and Berks Canal to Calne and Calstone than to have tunnelled there to Beckhampton where the Kennet rises. The magnificent springs at Calstone would have supplied the canal wholly on the Avon side, and the Kennet springs on the other side of the tunnel. However, it is not for the present writer to criticise the line chosen, nor can it be known the difficulties the originators of the canal may have had to meet at that time. No doubt the line chosen was least costly and easiest when all things were put on paper. Vested interests in those days were strong, and the opposition of great landowners had to be considered ; although on the other hand there was, at that period, a strong demand for the creation of waterways to revolutionise the transport of the country which had depended for so many years on horsedrawn traffic. Many landowners, however, welcomed the introduction of these waterways to pass through their property as a means of obtaining their heavy commodities at a cheaper rate and more commodious method. Again, to the millowners, the canal should, in the long run, have proved a blessing as a carrier, provided the owner had been compensated fully for loss of power which factor possibly was the most important matter of all to him. The loss of water to the mills passing through the locks would, undoubtedly, have seriously curtailed his yearly output.

Having expended so much by way of introduction to Part II. of this narrative, we will now return to our original intention of giving an account of our trip from Reading to Bristol Bridge, continuing from Seend Wharf above Lock No. 18.



CHAPTER I

A FRESH START—SEMINGTON VILLAGE—HILPERTON MARSH—WYKE MANOR—MR. W. H. YORK—A PLEASANT CAMPING STATION

Owing to pressure of business and other reasons a start was not made on Saturday, Aug. 4th, until three o'clock that afternoon. We moved off at that hour by motor, followed by a van carrying our stores and requisites, and we reached Seend Wharf roughly about three-thirty. By the time the boat was prepared for her further journey, and all the stores and luggage placed on board, it was past four o'clock. It was only a few yards to Lock No. 18 since this lock is situated in the middle of the series of locks under the name of Seend ; Nos. 21 to 17 inclusive. Those who have read through Part I. of this narrative will remember that we had passed through Nos. 21, 20 and 19. It had been our original intention to have started at one o'clock, and we had sent a message to the lock keeper to this effect. Unfortunately, however, it was impossible to get away so soon and the lock keeper had, therefore, given us up as a bad job and had gone off to Trowbridge. However, this did not trouble us, to work a lock ourselves was no difficulty. We had already managed a great number of these since our start from Reading. We were, therefore, soon through Lock No. 18, and with the engine running, proceeded comfortably to No. 17, which we again managed on our own. From 17 to Lock No. 16, which is Semington top lock, there is a good stretch of water of nearly two miles, and we should have passed through this with comfort had we not again been troubled with our eternal enemy on this canal—weeds. We succeeded, however, with the engine for roughly about one mile up to the first swing bridge, and here we should like to narrate that there are four swing bridges within a few hundred yards of

each other. The swing bridges, however (although always a nuisance since they demand somebody landing from the boat to open them), on the Bath side of Honeystreet are in a far better order, and open more easily than those between Honeystreet and Reading. The reason is clear, since between Honeystreet and Bristol there exists some traffic on the canal, and these bridges are opened more often. From Semington, at any rate, there is a continuancy of traffic on the canal, since Messrs. Noad, millers of this place, fetch all their grain from the Port of Bristol through this waterway, and their boats are passing through weekly. It was not, therefore, surprising from Semington onwards we found the general condition of the canal far superior to the condition up to the summit level.

To return to our journey. Having reached the first of the above-mentioned swing bridges, and having had to clean off our propeller two or three times, we decided that it was not good enough, and we landed one of our party and got out the towline. We towed the boat through the remaining swing bridges as far as the first Semington lock, No. 16. Here the lock keeper was awaiting us, and a good friend he proved to be for the remainder of that day. He saw us through the two locks of Semington Nos. 16 and 15, which we navigated again with the assistance of the towline. He looked after our boat, which we pulled up under the bridge at Semington, and where we disembarked for half-an-hour or so to walk to the nearest public-house in the village of Semington, where we regaled ourselves with a most excellent tea of newly-laid boiled eggs, first-class bread and butter, and some really good home-made cake. We returned to the boat somewhere about six-thirty, having purchased a supply of eggs from the same source as those which we had for our tea.

The lock keeper had kindly waited for us taking charge of the boat, and having once more all embarked, we started up our engine and proceeded ; the lock keeper coming with us along the tow-path on his bicycle to open some more swing bridges which he told us we should meet. From Semington Bridge, until the end of our journey at Bristol Bridge, we had not again to have recourse to the tow-line. From this point, at any rate as far as Bathampton, the weeds had been cut and cleared, and we were free from this trouble to that place. There were occasionally, isolated and floating weed which

meant now and then having to clear the propeller ; but the tow-line was not again used.

We proceeded very comfortably, therefore, from Semington Bridge as far as the aqueduct at Hilperton Marsh. We reached the stop gates of the aqueduct at about eight o'clock, the lock keeper having come right through with us to that point. Here we decided that it was time to stop for the night, and as our young man could find lodgings conveniently at Staverton, a little way back, we pulled up opposite an exceptionally beautiful country house, having covered five miles since our start from Seend at four o'clock. We moored for the night alongside some fir trees, where the canal is carried on an embankment, and across one field was the house mentioned, belonging to a Mrs. Clark—Wyke Manor House. This was one of the most attractive Jacobean houses it is possible to see. It is quite a small place, but it is not often one sees such an architectural gem. Some time ago views of it were shewn in " Country Life." From these views one was able immediately to recognise it, although we had never actually seen it before, as it lies some distance off any of the main roads. The time was getting late and it was our first night out. We had, therefore, to bustle to get our stores on shore, unpack, and our supper cooked. For that night we had to recourse to the lamps before we were able to turn in, let down the side curtains, and settle down for our first night's sleep on board the boat on which we were destined to spend the next fourteen days.

The next day, the Sunday before August Bank Holiday, proved one of the hottest days of the year : the sun rose in a cloudless sky and so continued until the evening. We had decided that we should not move on Sundays and the Company had especially asked us not to use the locks during that day of the week. The position, however, where we moored the boat, although in the shade on Saturday evening and early Sunday morning, was exposed before mid-day to the rays of the sun. This proved somewhat unpleasant, and in addition there were two wasps' nests close to our mooring station. One member of the party was twice stung in the morning while preparing the breakfast. Further than this, the place chosen was close to Hilperton and Trowbridge, and appeared to be a favourite exercise ground for the inhabitants of these places; also being a Sunday, it was full of people fishing. However,

we stayed until about three in the afternoon when we decided to take a walk up the canal with a view to ascertaining whether we could find any better place. We walked about two miles over the first aqueduct, out of the three, which we were going to cross. We have mentioned two of these in the introduction. This aqueduct carries the canal over the railway and over the River Biss. Although not so fine as either of those situated on the Bath arm, it is, nevertheless, a fine piece of engineering work. We continued our walk until within a mile-and-a-half of Bradford, where we met some people fishing, and amongst the party was Mr. W. H. York, who works for the celebrated firm of Messrs. C. & T. Harris, Calne, but whose daughter resides at Canal Farm, Bradford-on-Avon.

We had a chat with him, and we decided that the position where we met him on the other side of the canal was far superior as a mooring station than where we were. We, therefore, retraced our steps, packed up our boat as quickly as possible, brought it along over the aqueduct and through the further stop gates up to the place where we had met Mr. York. This proved to be a very pleasant position, being well shaded with a nice grass bank fairly free from wasps, and more away from the population.

We soon fixed up here, which on the whole, was one of the best situations for mooring our boat we found during the course of the trip. The water was deep, which you seldom get on the sides of the canal, so that we could bring the boat close alongside and the bank was sufficiently high to be exactly the right level for stepping on and off, and generally as said before, it was an excellent place.

We soon had the boat unpacked again and our things on shore. It was still fairly early, so that, having prepared ourselves some tea, we had an hour or two to spare. This we spent a portion of by giving the boat a good clean, which she sadly needed. When we returned to the position we had decided upon after meeting Mr York, we found the fishing party still there, but he had returned to the farm. After we had completed our clean-up of the boat, we found that our water jar was practically empty. We knew of no place to fetch water from beyond the farm where Mr. York was staying with his daughter, which he told us was some half-a-mile further on along the canal. We decided to take the

boat up to fetch some water, which we proceeded to do. This stretch where we were moored up to the place where we went to fetch our water is a straight reach, and was then fairly free from weeds, so that we soon ran our boat up and just as we arrived we met Mr. York coming out with his son-in-law. We told him that we had come for water, and he informed us that he just intended to walk up to the boat to see us. We, therefore, suggested that he had better come back with us, and embarked him and his son-in-law, and gave him a ride as far as our camping station, and back along the canal as far as the stop gates of the aqueduct mentioned above. We turned the boat by the gates and brought her back to the camping station and landed Mr. York and his son-in-law, who very kindly said they would come along in the morning with some fresh milk for us, and some glue which we badly needed for a repair to our kitchen department, since our chimney, which is in the form of a ventilator at the bow of the boat, had been knocked off through people clambering about on her going through Devizes locks. It was now getting towards night time, so that we dispatched our young man to his lodgings, cooked our supper, and were soon peacefully sleeping.

CHAPTER II

BRADFORD-ON-AVON—AVONCLIFF AQUEDUCT—THE BEAUTIES OF THE CANAL—ON THE BATH ARM—ENGINEERING DIFFICULTIES—LIMPLEY STOKE—WE MEET SOME FRIENDS

Next day was August Bank Holiday, and we had decided that we should move down the canal that afternoon. We were not astir very early next morning, and we had not long been abroad when Mr. York turned up with a large can of most excellent fresh milk from a Jersey cow and his pot of glue. We made him as comfortable as we could while he offered us his advice on how to cook our breakfast, which we were just commencing on his arrival. He stayed with us until we had the boat packed up and ready to move off. His daughter and grandson then joined us on the tow-path, and we gave all of them a lift down the canal as far as the farm. Here again we pulled up to land them and to obtain a further supply of paraffin oil which Mr. York was able to get for us, and to again re-fill our water jar. We wished Mr. York, Mrs. York, his daughter, son-in-law and grandson good-bye, and having once again started our engine, we proceeded on our way ; this was somewhere about two o'clock.

From there to Bradford Lock No. 14, about a mile distant, there was a certain amount of floating weed, which gave us a little trouble and necessitated stopping occasionally to clear the propeller. The Bradford Lock is, we were told, the deepest lock on the navigation and canal. Those who have read this tale will remember our experience in Lock No. 97, Towney's, and therein it was stated that was the deepest. However, we have not measured either of them, but the lock keeper at Bradford-on-Avon said his was the deepest, so possibly he may be right. Anyway, they are both deep locks, but they differ, since Bradford Lock was in good condition, whereas Towney's was in a very bad condition, as the reader will remember we had great difficulty to get through

it. We passed through Bradford Lock without mishap beyond picking up a few more floating weed, but which did not take long to clear away, and we now passed into the Bath arm.

The introductory chapter deals with the exceptional beauty of this arm, but if anything the portion of the canal from Bradford-on-Avon to Avoncliff Aqueduct is the most beautiful of all. We were so delighted with it that if it had not been too early in the day we should have liked to have pulled up for the night there. We slowed up the engine and let her tick over so that we were only proceeding at crawling pace. After we had proceeded down this reach a short way we decided that it was too attractive to go through quickly, and we pulled the boat up under a large beech tree spreading its branches and leaves over the canal, brought her alongside, moored her there, and proceeded to have a quiet and peaceful luncheon. It was Bank Holiday, and there were numbers of row boats passing up and down this reach. We stayed there as long as we could, but decided that we must move on eventually. We had not far to go before we passed out of this beauty spot and reached the Avoncliff Aqueduct. Here, again, we stopped, landed and made a good examination of this very fine architectural engineering work. It was a magnificent view to stand on the top of the aqueduct and look down at the Avon below, the railway running along side it, with a mill just above, and a waterfall over a weir just adjoining this. It was a place we could have stayed at longer had we nothing else to do.

Before continuing this narrative further, giving an account of our journeys, there is one point which has not been mentioned in the introductory chapter, but which we would like to bring in here. We have talked about scenery on the Bath Arm, and we have talked about the engineering part of the work of making the canal up the Valley of the Avon. In dealing with the second of these we referred to the canal being built on the side of a very steep cliff; but we did not then bring in the subject of the difficulties which the canal engineers at present meet with in connection with this Bath Arm, where the canal passes along side of the steep cliff, which has been cut out in the rock. This rock is full of deep fissures, and in order to retain the water in it the whole of this portion has been clay puddled. The clay puddle in time

is apt to give way, and there is great difficulty, so we understand, in retaining the water in this arm. Anybody who has seen the actual canal itself where it runs from Avoncliff Aqueduct to the Dundas Aqueduct must see how these difficulties arise. The water from the canal is almost continually leaking opposite the village of Limpley Stoke, which one would imagine is the worst portion to keep watertight of all. We have referred, further back in this account, to the waterwheel at Claverton, which raises the water out of the River Avon, and keeps the canal supplied, and it is on the working of this waterwheel that the Bath Arm relies for its supply. Had the arm been fed with a running stream, or river, no doubt these troubles, in regard to the leaks, would not have been so important. The canal from Bradford-on-Avon to Bath is narrower and is less deep than any portion we passed through, and one could quite realise that a loaded barge carrying its full complement would have very great difficulties in getting along the Bath Arm. The time we passed through the canal the supply in the River Avon was very low, which naturally affects the working of the waterwheel at Claverton, so that the volume of water pumped from this point would be less than as if the Avon were running with a full stream. We went over the pumping station at Claverton, and this will be described in detail later on. All we need say is that when the water in the Avon is low and the mills above are holding up for storage purposes, the waterwheel so lowers the water that it gets below the suction of the pumps, and naturally the effect of all this is that the Bath Arm was, at the time we passed through it, some six or seven inches under its normal height, owing to: (1) The waterwheel not being able to deliver its full amount; (2) The continual leaks in the canal between Avoncliff and Dundas Aqueducts.

The smaller boats used by Messrs. Noad, Millers, of Semington, can get through satisfactorily; but, as stated before, a barge fully loaded could not get through this arm without very considerable difficulties, or without having to lighten its load. What, however, the Company can do to remedy this trouble it is difficult to say, since if dredging operations were brought in the water in the canal would immediately disappear. On the other hand there must have been a time when the canal was in full use, and when the barges were passing up and down it daily, that this Arm must have been

freer and more easy for navigation purposes than it is at the present time. Anyway, it is not in our department in writing this tale to suggest remedies. The engineers who deal with the canal undoubtedly know how it is that the difficulties of navigating the Bath Arm to-day are such, and if these difficulties are more serious now than at the period when the canal was in full use.

We left this narrative at the Avoncliff Aqueduct, at which point we re-embarked and proceeded on our journey. From Avoncliff we passed alongside the steep hill, where both above and below the canal it is beautifully wooded. In fact, practically the whole distance from Avoncliff to the Dundas Aqueduct, the canal is passing through woodlands and although possibly not quite so attractive as that portion of it immediately below Bradford-on-Avon, it is, however very beautiful. The canal through these woodlands was fairly free from weeds, or at any rate they had recently been cut, and we sped our boat along, perhaps, rather faster than we should have done.

We had some friends staying for part of the summer at Limpley Stoke, and we had promised to give them a call during our trip through. We did not exactly know how Limpley Stoke lay then, and as each corner presented a scene perhaps more attractive than the last, we kept going on. Eventually we arrived at the Dundas Aqueduct, and again we pulled up the boat, disembarked to examine the finest of all the three aqueducts. In a conversation we then got into with an old man who had spent many years on behalf of the Company on this canal, but who had now been pensioned off, we were told that we had passed Limpley Stoke some way back. As, however, we had promised to see our friends, and as we had no objection to passing again through the scenery we had just come out of, we turned the boat and took her back as far as the bridge at Limpley Stoke. Here we found a cottage beside the canal, the occupants of which were able to supply us with boiling water, and here we partook of our tea. From enquiries we made we ascertained that our friends lived on the other side of the river. To get to it you had to climb down an exceedingly steep cliff. We left the boat some quarter of a mile back in the woods towards Avoncliff, and having fixed her there for our camping station, unloaded and prepared ourselves to stay there for the night. We then

proceeded to climb down this cliff, which took some doing, as it was almost precipitous as far as the level of the River Avon. We had walked across a meadow to the Avon, and there, behold, we saw our friends in two boats amusing themselves on the river. It was a coincidence, since they had only just come out and were going up the stream as far as Freshford. Without a boat it would have been difficult for us to get to their house without going a long way round by road. They pulled up one of their boats, we embarked, and they kindly took us back where we were regaled with refreshments, had an opportunity to use their telephone, and spent some time discussing old times. Theirs was a most attractive residence, which they had only taken for a month or so during the summer ; but it was built as practically all other houses are at Limpley Stoke, on the side of a steep hill, and their gardens dropped down in terraces as far as the river. The house is an old one, and is the Manor House, Limpley Stoke, having a history. At one time when the Mills on the Avon were used for the manufacturing of cloth it was a wool warehouse, and the zig-zag path up the side of the hill to the main road still exists. This path, in those days, was used by mules coming and going, loaded with wool. Since then the house has been used as a reformatory, and now as a domestic school. Having stayed with them for some time, we retraced our steps down their garden to the river side, and by means of their boat we passed up stream to the point where we had joined them. Here we landed and wished them goodbye. We had then to climb up this steep ascent, which was not easy, since it is nearly perpendicular, and there is but little foothold. One member of the party slipped and fell back several feet ; but eventually we reached the level of the canal and our boat. We soon had our cooking stove going and supper preparing. Our young man had been sent off to the cottage alongside the canal, where we had stayed for our tea.

CHAPTER III

FURTHER CANAL ATTRACTIONS—DUNDAS AQUEDUCT CROSSED —CLAVERTON PUMPING STATION—DIFFICULTIES OF CAMPING NEAR BATH—THE BATH LOCKS—RIVER AVON REACHED

Next day, Tuesday, August 7th, was uneventful, since we had arranged for some people to come over to see us on the boat at Limpley Stoke, and the day was spent in the same place. The morning and early afternoon was utilised by some of the party in cleaning up the boat and cooking food, while another climbed down the cliff to the Avon and went to try to catch a pike. The result was attended without success, the Avon at this place being very much overgrown, which made it difficult to do any spoon bait casting, no live bait were available, and it was early in the season to attempt the capture of these fish. Our party joined us in the afternoon, when we gave them tea, and after they had left we received a visit from our friends. By that time it was about six o'clock but we decided that the place where we were stationed was not ideal and that we would pack up the boat and move on into the woods nearer to the Dundas Aqueduct beyond the village of Limpley Stoke. These woods are far more secluded, and there are less people passing up and down the tow path, the canal being more overgrown on either side. This we proceeded to do, and moved some half-a-mile further towards Bath. We fixed up the boat at an ideal spot where we were almost covered in altogether with a roof of overhanging trees. We proceeded to get ourselves straight and to cook our supper. We had only just managed to get this meal completed when the weather broke and it started to rain. Luckily it did not rain too heavily before we were able to get things straight for the night, but after we were settled in, it rained very sharply most of that night. Next morning when we awoke the rain had passed and the sun

was shining brightly overhead, glinting through the trees on the waters of the canal.

In our introductory chapter we have talked of the beauty of the canal, but it is difficult to really describe how exceedingly attractive it is in fine weather, especially along this place where we were camped that night, it being further removed from human habitation. Between Limpley Stoke and the Dundas Aqueduct the canal seems to be passing through a tropical jungle.

Early in the morning we heard the sounds of wild life, the barking of a fox and the crowing of a pheasant. A rather terrifying experience also occurred : only some twenty yards from where our boat was stationed there was a loud crashing of the underwood, and we thought it must have been a stag which had been frightened. This grew louder and louder, and eventually an enormous boulder, weighing several tons, burst out through the thick undergrowth into the canal with a resounding splash. It is not known whether this often occurs, but it would have been a serious matter if this boulder had happened to fall into the water and struck any passing craft. No doubt it had become detached from the rocks at the top of the cliffs alongside which this canal has been constructed. To hear this thing crashing through the woods coming down the hill had a most mysterious effect, something one would imagine resembling an elephant charging through a jungle. We did not hasten to move from this locality, although it had been planned that we were to move on that day. We got away somewhere about two o'clock eventually and proceeded through the remainder of the woods and across the aqueduct which you will remember we had already crossed once before. Once across this aqueduct the canal is in more open country, although still continuing down the valley of the Avon. We ran on from Dundas as far as the pumping station at Claverton, and here we pulled up our boat and went on shore. The engineer, we noticed, supplied teas, and as we were anxious at the same time to look over this pumping station, we decided to take some tea with him. His cottage is situated some little way below the canal towards the river, and between these two the railway passes. We walked down to his house, and we informed him that we had come through from Reading with our boat, and although we had not been able to look over the

pumping station at Crofton, if it had not been that we had passed this too late in the day we should have been given permission to do so. We asked him if we might see his pumps and the waterwheel. This he kindly consented to and he took us all over the same. This waterwheel and pumps were constructed in the year 1810, and have been running continuously ever since. The pumps are very much on the type of the old beam engine, which we should have seen had we been able to go over the Crofton pumping station. The waterwheel is of very large dimensions ; the largest the writer has seen, being a breast shot wheel made of wood. It is regretted that we had not any writing materials with us, or we should have jotted down a few more particulars as to the capacity of the pumps and dimensions of the wheels. We did not even take the size of the delivery pipe, although we believed, on looking at the same, it was fifteen inches. At the time of our arrival it was delivering about a quarter of its capacity ; the water in the river, as we have said previously, was very low, and every now and then it was necessary, at any rate at night, when the mills were holding up above, to stop the waterwheel. This, as we also said before, accounted to a great extent for the level of the water in the Bath Arm being at such a low ebb. We thanked the engineer for showing us round and explaining everything, and we asked him if he would supply us with tea, which he informed us he would be pleased to do. We had a most excellent tea at his place, although there must have been several wasps' nests close by. The tea we had was served in his summer-house out of doors, and there were literally hundreds of wasps joining in our feast. However, none of us suffered from these. Eventually we re-embarked in our boat and proceeded towards Bath with a view to finding a decent place to spend the night. From Claverton to Bathampton, however, is much more open country as mentioned above, and we could not come across anywhere very suitable as we passed down the cana The canal was fairly free from weeds, as these had recently been cut and the bottom dragged.

About half-a-mile before reaching Bathampton we noticed one place which we thought might be suitable, but was not ideal. However, we passed on, and proceeded past Bathampton. We questioned numerous people on the tow-path where we could find a spot which was not overlooked, and

where we should have privacy. No doubt these people did not understand exactly what we wanted, but they informed us that between Bathampton and Bath we should be sure to find some such locality. This was destined not to be correct. We took the boat nearly into Bath, and the further we went the worse it became. There was one place we might just have managed, but even there there were houses on the hill above, and the country was very open. We decided to tie up and walk down the canal to see if there was any suitable place. The further we went the more we got into the town, and we came to the conclusion there was nothing else to be done but to retrace our steps to the other side of Bathampton and put up at the place we had noticed. This we therefore proceeded to do, returning about two miles. This made us rather late, and when we reached our place we found that the water on the side of the canal was very shallow, and we had difficulty in getting the boat up against the bank. In fact we had to drag it over the shallows to get it sufficiently near the shore to land our stores. This, as will be narrated later, created some very considerable trouble for us hereafter.

It should be noted that our engine was misbehaving again, and she was not running at all satisfactorily. We will pass over the night spent at this place. It was not an excellent camping station, being somewhat exposed and having a cottage nearly opposite us. There was, however, some rough ground between the canal and an adjoining field, which gave us a certain amount of shelter. On the whole it probably was the worst place we had stayed during the trip, but as we were getting near the end of our journey through the canal, and as we wanted most of the next day to get through the Bath locks, it was necessary to put up within measurable distance of Bath.

Next morning, Thursday, August 9th, we sent our young man off to obtain an engineer to come down and look over our engine, with a view to getting this to run better. He brought a man to us about ten-thirty, when we had just finished our breakfast. We took the engine to pieces and changed the plugs, and then we took her for a run, when she seemed to be going better. Having returned we collected our belongings, packed up the boat and got away about one o'clock, proceeding again over that portion of the canal we

had traversed the night before up to within half-a-mile of the first Bath tunnel. During the previous days we have mentioned that the canal was free from weeds, and this was so up to within this half-a-mile of the first Bath tunnel, where there is a small swing bridge carrying a footpath. The old canal was determined, however, that we should not be let off so lightly, and it wished to give us a good taste of what it could do in the way of weeds, and to remind us of the earlier part of our trip. From this footbridge, as far as the river Avon, it was as full of weed as it could be ; not only weed which grows off the bottom, but also large lumps of floating blanket weed which, when once it hits the propeller, you are finished ; the same as we met behind the Barracks at Devizes. This weed, for a boat driven with a screw, is hopeless ; and when once you have a good wad of it on the propeller, rudder and shaft, it takes a long time to get it off again. The canal seemed to say to us before we left it and passed on into the River Avon, that it would teach us a lesson not to attempt taking mechanical boats through its waters. The distance from the footbridge to the first of the Bath locks is about a mile, but it took us a long time. We should really have got out the tow-line as we should have got on much quicker, but we decided we would stick to the engine and keep cleaning off the weed, so we proceeded going perhaps twenty yards, stopping the engine and cleaning off again, till at last we reached Lock No. 13, the first of the six Bath locks. Before reaching these we had to pass through two tunnels. After passing through Savernake these tunnels at Bath are not of any special interest, one of which is sixty-six yards long, and the other is sixty-four yards. Both tunnels have tow paths along side. The special feature we noticed in regard to these is the construction of them, and the most excellent workmanship which must have been put into them at the time the canal was built. These tunnels are constructed in Box stone on classic lines, and with decorated and carved entrances and exits, figureheads having been wrought in the centre key-stones. The numbers of the locks at Bath are from seven to thirteen inclusive, and they run a few hundred yards apart from each on the same lines as the chain of locks at Seend. Between each of these locks, however, especially the uppermost, the weeds are bad, and again we had difficulties in getting the boat along.

Eventually we succeeded in passing through Lock No. 7, and immediately we were through this we passed into the River Avon, where we said good-bye to the old Kennet and Avon Canal, having passed through one hundred locks and completed seventy-five miles.

This was the end af our first plan of journeying through the canal from Reading to Bath, and here the story, if as set out originally, would end.

Those who have read so far will be able to realise something of the condition of the Kennet and Avon Canal, which has been existing as a waterway since 1810. It is (as the reader will realise) not in the best condition, but for a craft such as ours it is still passable, and the journey through it has been of great interest, if somewhat marred by the considerable difficulties we met with in traversing the same. It has been an experience worth anybody's time simply if only to see the feat of engineering which was accomplished when the canal was built, also it is worth anybody's time to pass through the Bath Arm and Savernake Tunnel. It seems sad that the traffic on the canal as it used to be cannot somehow be resuscitated. One fears, however, that with the speed required in business to-day that water-borne traffic along a canal moves too slowly for most traders. We have not to-day only competition of the railway against the traffic on the canal, but we have, in addition, a new competition of the roads, which competition, we know, is even considerably harming the railways. The railways in the past have broken up the canals, and it looks that in the future there may be a danger of the road defeating the railways. One cannot help remarking that it is a case of " the biter being bitten." So here we wish our old canal "Au revoir," we will not say " adieu." Some day we may wish to use it again to return to our older Father Thames.

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CHAPTER IV

WE SPRING A LEAK—ARRIVE AT SHEPPARD'S BOAT-HOUSES—STILL LEAKING—REPAIRS EFFECTED TEMPORARILY—A DAY SPENT ASHORE

Once in the River Avon, this abomination of weed was ended. We had a broad expanse of deep flowing water. This would have been excellent for us if things had been a little different. We had hardly proceeded into the river Avon more than a few yards when we noticed our engine was again misbehaving, and on opening the engine cover we observed she was throwing water all over the place. At first we thought that the cooling system had broken down, but on further investigation we found our boat had four or five inches of water in her. We were in an awkward place since on both sides of us were steep walls and deep water, and we knew that we must get her alongside somewhere as quickly as possible to get our pumps working. We noticed that a few yards further than where we were at that time, which was by the Railway Station, and under the main road bridge, that there was a mill which had some chains hanging down the wall. We ran up to these hung on and stopped our engine, getting out our bilge pump and proceeded to pump her as soon as we could. She was taking water fairly fast.

We should have narrated earlier that just as we were pass ng between the Bath Tunnels we again ran into a very bad matted lump of this blanket weed, which gave our rudder a nasty blow almost identically the same as happened to us behind Devizes Barracks when we ran ashore. We mention this because it had some bearing on the leaking of our boat which will be explained at a later date. We did not then know the reason why our boat was taking in water in the way she was. We knew that she had had a lot of rough usage going through the canal, and it was likely that something had happened to injure her somewhere. At this time

and at this place there was a heavy wind blowing straight up stream, and we were getting the full force of it between the buildings, and this accounted for the necessity of getting somewhere where we could fix the boat up while we pumped her out, otherwise we should have been blown back straight into one of the piers of the many bridges under which the river passes in Bath. With the help of our pump we were able to lower the water sufficiently to re-start the engine, which again was giving trouble, but which was going sufficiently to get us along, although not at top speed. We moved forward about half-a-mile until we were a little more free of houses and dwellings, and having found somewhere where we could fix up the boat, and at the same time get out of her, we decided to pull up and have some lunch, and also to get some more oil, which we thought the engine probably required. This we proceeded to do, and after pumping her out once more we moved away and soon left the City of Bath behind.

Now in the River Avon the moving forward of the boat, even if the engine was not at its best, presented no great difficulties, and although moving slowly we passed on down to Weston Lock No. 6, being the first of the locks on the Avon between Bath and Bristol. Here our pass or ticket had to be surrendered, and we had to obtain a fresh one to take us through to Bristol, for which we were charged ten shillings and sixpence. Through Weston Lock the river is in open country, and is quite attractive. We went under another fine bridge which carries the main road from Bath to Bristol. From there for the next two miles the river is passing through high banks and is overhung with trees. We passed twice under the Midland Railway, and when through the second of these we got into a long straight stretch which leads down to Kelston Lock No. 5, being nearly a mile. Those who have travelled by train from Bath to Bristol will observe this stretch as the river runs alongside the railway the whole distance. The time was now getting on, but we decided that we must get our boat as far at any rate as Sheppard's Boat-houses at Saltford, so that her leaking condition could be remedied. We passed down this mile, drew up at Mr. Sheppard's rafts. We called for Mr. Sheppard himself, and explained to him our troubles, but it was not possible to do very much that night since to investigate thoroughly,

it meant divesting the boat of everything inside it and taking up the floor boards. Having therefore pumped her out again, and having made arrangements with Mr. Sheppard to bring her down again next morning, we retraced our steps and found a most excellent camping station alongside the Clifton Rowing Club grounds. These people very kindly consented to our using their grounds to fix up our boat. Here we were destined to stay for two nights. It was a very pleasant place, and we were comfortable in spite of the fact that the railway was close over our heads, and trains passing up and down made it rather noisy. Our first night in this place was somewhat disturbed owing to trains, and owing also to the condition of our boat since twice during the night we had to get up and man the pumps, as she was taking water so rapidly.

Next day was uneventful, having gone through our usual performance, having cooked our breakfast after a swim with the dog, which we were now able to appreciate in the river, and not in the canal, we cleared the boat of all our stores, luggage, etc., and took her down to Mr. Sheppard's. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, this day Friday, August 10th, came on wet. The stores which were landed including our blankets and bedding, were rushed under cover as soon as possible, and before any serious damage occurred. It did not, however, add to the comfort of those who were engaged in the repairs to the boat itself. Having brought her down to Mr. Sheppard's, and having removed the floor boards, we were able to examine her closely. We found that the trouble was coming from the steering column. The reader will remember that the rudder had received a blow, which had broken our wires by means of which the boat was steered with a hand wheel, behind Devizes Barracks, when we had to revert to steering with a hand tiller. Again we dragged the boat to get her to the side just before we reached Bath, and further she received another blow from the floating weed in Bath itself. The fact of these three was that we had bent the steering rod and had so damaged the column in which the rod runs that this opened a seam in the bottom of the boat just in front of the rudder. The water was coming in through this fairly fast. This business had now to be tackled, and our boat was too heavy with the engine in it to get her on shore. Making a long story short a temporary

repair was at any rate effected by piling some heavy weights into the bows and passing a timber under the stern by which means we got the stern just out of the water. We were then able to drop out the rudder and have this straightened, at the same time a man lying in a punt was able to temporarily re-caulk up the seam. The leak was not completely stopped, but it was very much better when these repairs were finished. It took from twelve o'clock that day until just before dark that night to get this work completed, and owing to the rain it was not a very pleasant job. Practically the whole of that day was therefore spent at Mr. Sheppard's Boat-houses, at which place we were able to get our meals. It was, perhaps, fortunate, since some friends had come down to see us, and we had intended taking them out in the boat, but even if these repairs had not been necessary, it would have been unpleasant with the wet weather to try to arrange a picnic in the boat. Our friends, therefore, had to content themselves by having their meals at Mr. Sheppard's restaurant with us. About seven-thirty the repairs were finished, and we moved her back up to our camping station. We were late that night in getting our evening meal, since we had to get everything back on board and darkness set in before we completed ; so ended Friday, August 10th.

CHAPTER V

WE MOVE DOWN THE AVON—A FRIENDLY FARMER—HANHAM LOCK—FINAL BEAUTIES OF THE RIVER—THE ARIEL ROWING CLUB OF BRISTOL

On Saturday, August 11th, the weather had changed, and it was a lovely day. It was an eventful day also for us, since we made a long journey. We moved on that day from just above Kelston Lock No. 5 through the whole of the remainder of the water way down to Bristol, and accomplished nine miles, passing through five locks. We moved off somewhere about twelve o'clock in glorious weather ; the wind having dropped and the sun was shining without a cloud in the sky again. Our first lock was Kelston No. 5, which is situated just opposite Mr. Sheppard's Boat-houses. There is no lock keeper living at this lock, and Mr. Sheppard sent a man across to help us through. The distance from Lock No. 5 to Saltford Lock No. 4 is only one mile, and we quickly passed down this reach, the river again going under the Midland Railway. When we arrived at Lock No. 4 we found the lock keeper there. He is in charge of three locks, Nos. 3, 4 and 5. We offered him therefore a lift in the boat to come down with us and work the next lock, No. 3 Swinford, which was another mile distant. The river requires but little description through this portion. It is deep with high banks most of the way ; certainly attractive, but nothing to compare with its grandeur further on which we shall talk about later. The village of Saltford is perched up on a high hill on the left, and the country is flat for some distance to the right before reaching the steeper hills towards Togg Hill. Before arriving at Lock No. 3, the country widens out on both sides. It is especially noticeable in the River Avon that the banks are nearly throughout high above the river as much as ten to twelve feet in places. This peculiarity makes it exceedingly difficult to find suitable

places for our purpose of mooring the boat and camping for the night, since as the reader will realise it is essential to have a bank which is about level with the gunwale of the boat. Having reached Lock No. 3, and the lock keeper having disembarked and let us through, we wished him good-bye and passed on down the river. Just below Lock No. 3 we passed the effluent discharging from the Bath Sewerage Works ; not an exceptionally pleasant place to dally in, but it might have been worse. In fact, knowing a good number of the effluents of large towns, we will say that this Bath effluent was perhaps of higher standard than the majority. Soon after passing this point we decided that we should like some luncheon, and we kept our eyes open to try and obtain some place where we could fix up the boat for a short time. This we were able to discover in the form of a sand bank which the river had washed up, and which had now become hard ground. This was a pleasant place, being shaded by overhanging trees. We pulled up and moored the boat, spending half-an-hour or so in having our luncheon. While doing so we were visited by the owner of the adjoining land, with whom we got into conversation, and who was most friendly disposed. We informed him of our requirements for a camping station, and he told us that anywhere on his land we were at liberty to fix up if we could find a suitable place. It was then too early to think of tying up for that night, but we thanked him for his kindness and told him that on our return journey up the river we might be thankful to accept his kind offer. He even went so far as to ask us to come over and stay with him at his farmhouse. He informed us there was " bags of room." He also offered to supply us with fresh milk, eggs or any other requisitions we wanted. Later we availed ourselevs of his kind offer, but not that day. Luncheon having finished, and the things packed up, we pushed off once more and continued our journey down the River Avon. Our next lock was Keynsham No. 2, a further two miles distant. When we reached this lock the lock keeper was not there, and we had to tackle this on our own.

Before we commenced this chapter we ought perhaps to have stated that our young man who had accompanied us on the trip from Reading to Bath through the canal, and whom we had taken with us especially to help us with locks, swing bridges, towing the boat and meeting with other obstacles and diffi-

culties, was no longer with us. We had decided that, when we reached the River Avon we could dispense with his services and therefore that morning, Saturday, August 11th, we had dispatched him by train back home from Saltford Station. There were only two of us, therefore, to get through Keynsham Lock No. 2. One remained in the boat and the other worked the lock. We managed it successfully, but we had to wait outside Keynsham Lock for a matter of twenty minutes or more since there was a launch drawn up in the tail of the lock, the owner had gone ashore and left her there. We did not like to open the lock paddles as she was right across the water way, and we were afraid we might damage her or send her adrift. However, he returned in due time, and we asked if he would mind taking his launch further away, and he informed us that he was going straight back to Bristol then on her. After passing Keynsham Lock No. 2 the river runs alongside Fry's extensive chocolate factory at Somerdale, and we passed along their large meadow for some considerable distance. Again we were in high banks, and the land on either side was beginning to close in on us as one draws down to the last lock on the River, Lock No. 1 Hanham. We would narrate that Keynsham Lock No. 2 is exceedingly deep, whereas Hanham No. 1 is a shallow lock. Hanham Lock is the last of the 106 locks, County Lock, Reading, as the reader will remember, being that number as set out in Chapter I., Part I.

Hanham Lock is in charge of a lady lock keeper, and very well she does her duty. It is undoubtedly an important place, so far as the navigation is concerned, since it is the first lock under the jurisdiction of the Great Western Railway Company, where all tolls are paid for traffic passing from Bristol towards Bath and beyond. She had the lock ready for us in no time, and we passed in. We handed up to her our ticket, which we had taken at Weston Lock No. 6, and we said good-bye to the waterway from Reading to Bristol under the jurisdiction of the Railway Company, having at last completed the whole of this journey.

That portion of the river from Hanham Lock on to Bristol is under the control of the Corporation of the City of Bristol, which extends from the tail of Hanham Lock through the City of Bristol to the estuary of the River Severn at Avonmouth, forming throughout the boundary between the

Counties of Gloucestershire and Somerset. The water below Hanham Lock is slightly tidal, rising as much as two feet eight inches during the spring tides.

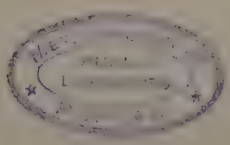
As mentioned earlier, just before reaching Hanham Lock the country was closing in on us. After Hanham Lock the river is extremely beautiful. It is difficult to really describe this. It runs in a deep gorge with high hills on either side, the left side being covered with woods right down to the water's edge; the right side being partly wood and partly rock of red sand stone. The river winds and twists and the view you get down this gorge must be very exceptional in this country. We hear, and most people know of the beauties of the Thames, especially above Maidenhead on to Cookham. We know the Thames well, but in our opinion there is nothing on the Thames which can beat the River Avon from Hanham Lock as far as Conham, a distance of just over two miles. In order not to miss it we slowed the engine down and passed through this beautiful gorge dead slow.

Some descriptions have been given of scenery during this trip, but the finish from Hanham down to the outskirts of Bristol is beyond all the finest. The Bath Arm is very beautiful, but of a somewhat different nature from the grandeur that one meets with in this part of the Avon.

The time was getting late, and we had our eyes well open for a camping station.

In fact we had intended to fix up for the night immediately below Hanham Lock, but the scenery was so attractive that we could not resist rounding each corner in front of us in order to see what it was like beyond. Eventually, therefore, we journeyed some two-and-a-half miles below Hanham Lock, and we reached down almost to the outskirts of Bristol. It was now about quarter to eight, and it was most essential that we should find somewhere immediately. Unfortunately the banks were high on both sides, and on the left side woods growing right down to the water's edge, so that it was impossible to get the boat alongside. We passed an extremly attractive boat-house, belonging to the Ariel Rowing Club, close to the tunnel which the railway passes through just before reaching St. Anne's Park Station from Bath. Just beyond this we met a gentleman who owns a boat-house adjoining, Mr. Avery, Managing Director of the well-known firm of Wine Merchants, Messrs. Avery & Co., of

Bristol. We asked him if he could assist us by allowing us to tie up to his landing stage. He very kindly gave us permission to do so, but when we had brought the boat along side, we found that his stage was not long enough for our boat. There was nowhere else we could possibly find, owing to the steep and high banks in the immediate vicinity, except the landing stage of the boat-house adjoining mentioned before, belonging to the Aerial Rowing Club. We asked Mr. Avery if he thought the Club would mind us using their stage. He informed us that he was a member of the club, and had been so for many years. He took the trouble to go across to the Club and introduce us as old friends of his to the acting Captain of the Club, who happened to be there that evening. The result was that from his good offices we were given permission, and we were given a letter from the Captain to hand to the Caretaker when he arrived. We had now to set about getting our boat fixed up for the night and our stores unpacked. This landing stage was most suitable for this purpose of getting our stores in and out, and we were not very long before we had settled down comfortably for the night, having accomplished one of the longest trips we had made on this second part of our journey, viz., nine miles. We were destined to remain at this boat-house for some little time, and most comfortable and pleasant it was, being an exceptionally attractive place. It was built on the side of a steep hill by the water's edge with thick woods behind, and a zig-zag path which passes up through these woods to the summit above, being the entrance to the club. The Club consists of a boat-house, club-rooms, and all necessary accessories, lawns and tea gardens. It was beautifully laid out with flowers, and kept in first-class condition and order. We could not possibly have found a more pleasant and attractive place to remain in.



CHAPTER VI

TRIP TO BRISTOL BRIDGE—THE FEEDER CANAL—MISCHIEVOUS CHILDREN—PORT OF BRISTOL AUTHORITY

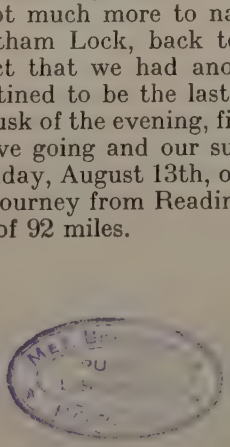
Next day was Sunday, August 12th, which we passed without the boat being unmoored. There was really a lot to be done in getting ourselves more or less straight and cleaning up, besides one was only too pleased to have a peaceful day without moving. During the afternoon we went to the Club-rooms of the Boat-house, and went through our correspondence, which had got sadly in arrear, and in the evening we took our letters and went up the Zig-zag path and out on the top into the world beyond to the nearest letter box. Before returning we went for a short st oll. It seemed somewhat strange from the quiet boat-house, where we saw hardly a soul, except occasional people walking along the tow-path on the opposite side of the river, to emerge out of these beautiful woods into what is fast becoming a suburb of Bristol. One could not realise when down on the water-line of the boat-house that one was so close to the busy commercial City of Bristol. We were pleased once more to return to this beautiful spot where we spent that Sunday night as well.

Next day, Monday, August 13th, was not quite so pleasant, so far as the weather was concerned, as we had experienced on the Saturday and the Sunday. The wind had risen on the Sunday afternoon, and on the Monday we had continuous thunder storms. There were fair intervals between these, and the storms did not become bad until about the middle of the day. About mid-day the caretaker arrived, and he came to us and asked us what we were doing there. Luckily we had the Acting Captain's note, which we presented to him, when he immediately did all he could to make us comfortable and to help us in every way possible. We were anxious to complete this journey from Reading at any rate down to

Bristol. The caretaker, however, informed us that we were not likely to find anywhere else beyond his boat-house where it would be comfortable for us to stay. Just round the corner beyond the boat-house we were told that we should begin entering into a commercial part of the river. We therefore decided that we would make a trip from this boat-house as far as Bristol Bridge and back, and we decided that this journey should be made that Monday afternoon. The morning continued to be more or less stormy, and was so in the early afternoon, but about three o'clock the weather appeared to be on the mend, and we decided to risk it. We left all our stores on shore, placing what we could under cover, and with the necessary equipment for navigating the boat, we started up our engine and moved off. This journey was of interest, but was by no means attractive. As we were informed, almost as soon as we rounded the next corner, we came across some large tar works, and shortly on the other side of the river was another large factory. A few yards further on than this you come to the first lock under the Bristol Corporation, known as Netham Lock. The gates of this lock were wide open since in the ordinary sense it is not a lock, but more or less stop gates, so we passed straight through, nobody stopped us or said anything to us. We then proceeded down what is known as the Feeder Canal. We were now properly in the commercial part of Bristol; factories on either side of us, and it appeared to be a very rough neighbourhood. The factories along side the Feeder Canal have all sorts of obnoxious smells. We did not take a note of what each factory was, but we noticed one, Messrs. Cole's Blood Manure. None of them were very attractive, and they all smelt. The water down this Feeder Canal also smelt, and it had all sorts of strange colours from black to brown, purple and yellow. It appears that each of these various works discharge their effluent into this canal, and each one appears to vie with the other in making it a different colour from the rest. We were not sorry when we reached Totterdown Lock, which is one mile distant from Netham Lock. We did not pass through Totterdown Lock as this would have taken us back into the river, and so down to Avonmouth. Just before you reach Totterdown Lock is another stop gate from where the canal continues through to Bristol Bridge, and beyond to Bathurst Basin and Cum-

berland Basin, both of which are in conjunction with the Bristol Floating Harbour. From the stop gates at Totterdown Lock to Bristol Bridge the canal is somewhat better. We passed under the main line of the Great Western Railway, which crosses the canal at this point just before it enters Templemeads Station from Bath. The weather had again turned stormy, and just before we got to the Railway Bridge a violent storm started, accompanied by a very heavy wind. We ran under the bridge for shelter, but we had the greatest difficulty to remain under it owing to the violent wind, and especially as we could find nothing to hold on to at the side. Two or three times we were blown out from under the bridge into the rain, but at last we found we could remain under it by reversing our engine, and with the engine running not too fast we could just remain still against the wind. This we did until the worst of the rain was over. From this point on to Bristol Bridge is not a great distance, being roughly about a quarter-of-a-mile. We ran on down, therefore, and opposite the Bridge we found a boat-house where we were able to disembark and leave the boat. Our next move was to adorn ourselves so as to be a little more respectable than we were at that time, since we were afraid if we walked into the heart of Bristol attired as we were, we should have been run in as having escaped from some neighbouring institution. The boat-house people very kindly gave us their office wherein we changed our clothes, and having done so, we proceeded to march boldly into Bristol, where we purchased some further attire and replenished our stores. After that we proceeded to a restaurant and had a most excellent tea. This over we went to the General Post Office and telephoned home to enquire if all was well. We did not return to the boat until it was seven o'clock, and we had nearly four miles to get back to the Ariel Rowing Club Boat-house. While we were in Bristol some heavy storms had fallen, and on our return we found that the people with whom we had left our boat had kindly let down our curtains. This delayed the start of our return. We got away about quarter past seven, and proceeded along the waterway to Totterdown Lock into the Feeder Canal. We set our engine on full speed ahead to get back as quickly as possible. We had a rather unpleasant experience going back the Feeder Canal, since some children on one of the bridges just before we got to Netham Lock

threw down on the top of our boat some large clods of turf and mud. These came down on our awning with a terrific crash, and when we passed to the other side of the bridge this operation was repeated. Luckily the awning withstood this onslaught, although it somewhat bent the stays. A few yards further on we reached Netham Lock, and there we were met by an official of the Port of Bristol, who stopped us and informed us that we could not use this canal without payment, and that we ought to have paid when we went through. We told him that when we went through there was nobody there, and we had no information that we had to pay anything. However, we were made to disembark, go to his office to take ticket No. 497, issued by the Port of Bristol Authority, charged five shillings for coming down this most unpleasant and "smelly" canal and back again. There was nothing else to do but to pay the money, and as time was still getting later, owing to these delays, we obtained his passport, re-embarked and moved off again, not before, however, we had found out that a son of this gentleman who was in charge of the locks had married the previous Saturday, August 11th, a girl from Calne, by name Miss Hill. It shows how small the world is. We parted from him very good friends, and we told him of our possible journey next year through his canal once more, when we suggest going up the Severn. There is not much more to narrate of our return from this point, Netham Lock, back to the Ariel Rowing Club beyond the fact that we had another storm of rain. However, it was destined to be the last that night, and we arrived back in the dusk of the evening, fixed up our boat and soon we had the stove going and our supper cooking. This was the finish of Monday, August 13th, on which day we had completed the total journey from Reading to Bristol Bridge, a distance by water of 92 miles.



CHAPTER VII

WE LEAVE THE ARIEL ROWING CLUB—RETURN UP THE RIVER—CAUGHT BY THE RAIN—A NIGHT ASHORE—KEYNSHAM—FRIENDS ARRIVE—THE FRIENDLY FARMER'S BULL—BACK AT SALTFORD—CATCHING THE TRAIN

The end of Chapter VI. should finish this narrative since it gives, what was the original intention of the writer, an account of the journey in our boat from Reading to Bristol. We are, however, adding a last chapter to complete the whole of the time we spent on the boat until Saturday, August 16th, when we had to come ashore and return home. As mentioned in the last chapter, the day that we journeyed to Bristol Bridge and back to the Ariel Rowing Club was Monday, August 13th, and we spent that night again tied up alongside the landing stage of this very attractive place. On Tuesday we decided that we could not very well further take advantage of their hospitality, and that we must start making back up the river towards Saltford, where we had arranged we should leave our boat at the end of our trip, in charge of Mr. Sheppard. On Tuesday morning, therefore, we made the necessary preparations to move. We were, however, somewhat hampered by thunder storms, accompanied by heavy rain. Shortly after mid-day the weather looked to be on the mend, and having, therefore, got our boat packed up and all our stores together, which took some time owing to their being scattered about in various parts of the Club's grounds, and in their boat-house out of the rain, we moved off up the river and along that extremely beautiful portion of it between Conham and Hanham Lock. We had not gone very far when our engine began to give trouble again, and we had to pull up, take out the plugs and clean them. We took the opportunity at this time to have some lunch, having fixed up the boat at the side of the woods, which stretch right

down to the water's edge on the left bank. After completing our meal and packing up our luncheon basket, we started up our engine again. We had hardly, however, got this going when we had the misfortune for the second time during this trip, mentioned in the first chapter of Part I, to drop our boat hook. This necessitated a great deal of manœuvring in turning the boat round to come back and pick it up, but having accomplished this, and having found that cleaning the plugs had put the engine into good running order, we got on first rate to Hanham Lock. Here the lady lock keeper was ready again, and very soon let us in. She handed us our pass which the Company had kindly granted to allow us to bring the boat back without further payment from Bristol to Saltford. Through Hanham Lock we were off again, and with the engine running first rate, we made record time to Keynsham Lock. We did this stretch in a quarter of an hour, a distance of two miles. We were going all out because we were informed by the lady at Hanham Lock that the keeper at Keynsham left at five o'clock. It was then exactly quarter to five when we came out of Hanham. We arrived at the tail of Keynsham Lock as the clock struck five, but we were unlucky, since the man had just gone off to catch his train back to Bath, he being a relief man on duty at this lock temporarily. This meant that for the second occasion we had to work Keynsham Lock on our own, and working it coming up is not nearly so easy as coming down. However, we drew up alongside some steps just short of the Lock, and we managed to push the boat inside sufficiently to close the gates. Having done this the rest was not so difficult since we had only to let the water in, and by means of the boat-hook from the top to keep her from bumping against the sides as the water rose. This lock having been accomplished, and having re-embarked, we moved further up the stream. It had been our intention to run up to the place where the reader will remember we had fixed up for lunch on the downward journey, and where we had met a friendly farmer. Our proposals were to moor the boat at this place, and to remain there until the end of the time of our trip, living a peaceful and idle life, accompanied by the pleasant occupation of fishing. Unfortunately, however, the fates were against us. As we were coming up we noticed the sky behind us was getting blacker and blacker.

We passed about a mile beyond Keynsham Lock, when we saw what we thought was going to be an excellent place to fix up for the night. We ran the boat up alongside to investigate whether this place was a suitable one, and fixed up temporarily to land. We just got out to look on shore to see if it would suit us when the rain started. We ran back and let down the curtains ; the time was then about five-thirty. The rain came down in sheets from five-thirty to at least seven-thirty. We had had no tea, and we were getting very cold. We had taken while sitting in the boat a " Counsel of War " before the rain ceased, and we reluctantly came to the conclusion that it was quite impossible to stay on the boat that night, since not only were the curtains very wet, but everything on the land was soaking. At seven-thirty, or thereabout, there was a break, and we proceeded as quickly as possible to roll up our curtains, unmoor the boat and re-start the engine, returning to Keynsham.

When we arrived we were rather at a loss to know what to do and where to leave the boat. Luckily, however, the man who keeps a raft and lets out boats came to our assistance and offered us to fix our boat alongside his raft. He also offered to allow us to remain there that night, and we should have done better if we had so agreed. However, we had had nothing to eat or drink previous to our passing through Hanham Lock, and we were getting famished. We decided, therefore, that we would walk into Keynsham, get some food there, and come back to the boat, since we could quite well have slept there, as his rafts were dry, and there was plenty of covering under which we could put our stores. We got out of the boat and wrapped ourselves up in mackintoshes, and started to walk up to Keynsham. We had not realised how far Keynsham was from the river. By the time we got there it was nearly nine o'clock. In addition to this the rain started to come down in buckets, and here we were walking about Keynsham in thin shoes, very much unclothed, and with only a mackintosh to cover us. We tried two public houses for food, both of which said they had nothing, and it was nearly dark. The last one we went into however, suggested that we could get some food at the Lamb and Lark, and they offered to telephone this place, which was some way down the road, to enquire. Fate seemed to be against us, as the telephone at the Lamb and Lark had

gone wrong. However, we succeeded in getting a message through to them, and they said they could feed us. After consultation, we also asked if they could put us up for the night, and this they gladly agreed to do. The rain was still coming down in torrents, and we really felt it was impossible to return to the boat. Our next difficulty was to get a conveyance, but from this point our luck changed, since the public house where we were talking on the 'phone had a motor car for hire. The proprietor immediately got this out and took us down in it to the Lamb and Lark, where we went in and fixed up some rooms and ordered some food as soon as they could get it ready. One of the party remained and the other returned in the motor with an assistant from the hotel to the rafts. It was now practically pitch dark, and the nearest the motor could get to the rafts was about three hundred yards away. We had to walk down a narrow zig-zag path from this point.

We got on the boat and pulled off the luggage containing our wearing apparel, etc. We fixed the boat up as best we could in the dark, and in the pouring rain, returning with the luggage to the car and right glad we were to get back once more to the hotel.

It was a change and rather pleasant after ten days or so of living rough on the boat to sleep once more under a roof. About ten o'clock we got some food, which was our first meal since lunch, which consisted of some hot tea, ham and eggs. This we bolted, and having divested ourselves of our wet garments, and got out what we wanted for the night, we soon fell into bed, but even then sleep did not come easily, since after all the excitement and strangeness of coming indoors again after living out it was not easy to get off for either of us. It is a remarkable thing, but after living out of doors, or partially out of doors for some time, to come back and live in a house is always trying for the first couple of nights. One feels as if one is enclosed in a tight space, and the roof is falling down on top of one.

Next morning the weather had completely changed as it always seems to do after a wet day. It was a glorious morning, with the sun shining and quite warm. We spent some little time at Keynsham after we had our breakfast, shopping and attending to various requisites we wanted, and we had lunch on shore.

That day we had arranged for our friends to visit us again, and they came down about three o'clock, by which time we were back on the boat. We found that we had left some clothing at the Ariel Rowing Club, and we therefore, on their arrival, took their car back by road to the Club. It was interesting to return once more and walk down the zig-zag paths through the Woods to this beautiful place, which we were able to show our friends, as the place where we stayed at for three nights. We found our missing garments, and returned in the car to Keynsham. The day continued to be pleasant, and we had a picnic on the rafts, providing tea for our friends off the boat. By the time they left us it was about six o'clock. It was too late then to consider making any further movements that night, so with permission of the boat keeper we stayed the same night tied up alongside his rafts, and very comfortable we were. The next day the weather continued good, and so it did until the end of our time. In fact, the last three days after the stormy Tuesday were brilliant ; we could not have asked for anything better. We moved off fairly early up the river looking for the place where we had tied our boat for lunch on the downward journey. When we got there, however, we did not think this sand bank was so pleasant for a camping place as it was for the purpose of having luncheon, and we thought we would travel on to see if we could find anything better. We, therefore, travelled on up to the tail of Swinford Lock, but we could not find anything exactly suitable, and as just short of Swinford Lock the reader will remember there exists the out-fall of the Bath Sewage Works, we did not want to be too close to this. We therefore turned again and came back. We tried one place close to the Midland Railway Bridge, but this did not suit us, and we passed our old luncheon place. Just beyond we found a fairly suitable spot, at which we brought the boat alongside, and decided it would do. There was, however, an old stump sticking out which prevented the boat going right up alongside as we should have liked. This stump appeared to be rotten, and we thought we could break it off. We tried to do so with the boat-hook from the shore, but failed. We therefore got out the tow-line and, fixing it to the stump, we ran it along shore and proceeded to pull, thinking with this leverage we should break the stump off. We tried twice without success. We then set

our heels to the ground, gave one mighty heave, and the result was that the stump won and the rope broke. We repeated the experience of the gentleman who tried to tow us through the weeds just beyond Widmead Lock, as we turned complete somersaults backwards. This was the end of that struggle, and we gave in leaving a proportion of the bow of the boat beyond where we could step into it. However, it did not matter very much as we found we could get in the boat quite well a little further back, and we fixed up here, and here we remained until the end of the trip. This place was really quite pleasant. We were under trees and had a nice bank, although high above the boat. We proceeded as soon as we could, after landing stores, to start our fishing, and we spent the rest of the day amusing ourselves at this occupation. It took some time to get started, since beyond getting out the fishing things, setting up rods, we had to go and procure some bait by digging worms, and in the meantime we had to occupy ourselves in getting our meals, so ended Thursday, August 16th.

There is not much more to narrate before closing this account of our trip. The next day we spent alongside the friendly farmer's land, and this was occupied by fishing, cooking and cleaning up the boat. We had an adventure that day, which is worthy of record. It was not long after we had finished our breakfast when we noticed a bull looking at us some ten yards off. We had the dog with us, which was sitting by our sides. We decided that " discretion was the better part of valour," and we all bolted into the boat, including the dog, which we hid by letting down the curtains, but the bull did not seem very ferocious as beyond shaking its head and swishing its tail, he came no nearer. Therefore, armed with the boat-hook in front of us, we attacked, and the bull retired gradually and went off back to its cows. Although this bull remained in the same field as we were for the rest of that day and the next, it did not bother us again, but to see it standing with its head down only a few yards from us was rather frightening. Possibly it had only come to investigate and find out who the strangers were on its land, or more particularly it was attracted by the dog. Later that day we took a walk across the fields and saw the farmer from whom we purchased some goods and filled up our water bottle. We told him of the incident of the bull,

which appeared to amuse him, but he gave orders that it was to be kept in that night.

We succeeded in catching a few small gudgeons, also several eels, all of which went into the cooking pot for breakfast, so Friday, August 17th, was past.

Saturday was our last day, and it was perhaps one of the most pleasant days of our trip so far as the weather was concerned. We spent the morning in idleness, accompanied by fishing, but after lunch we had to set to and pack up the boat and get off. It took some time as it included putting away all the fishing gear, and also we had to pack the stores, so that those things which were to remain on the boat were placed in the cases intended to be left on the boat. Lists also had to be made of exactly what was to remain on the boat, and what was to return with us. We eventually had everything packed up, and we embarked for our last occasion during, at any rate, this summer. Our engine, as it was our last day, behaved itself, and was running in its best form, so it did not take us long to run through to Swinford Lock. Very luckily for us the lock keeper was there, and the lock was ready since he was expecting another craft up the river. We therefore soon passed through this lock, and we asked him to come on board and travel with us to the next lock, Saltford, which he did. These locks are not far distant, and we ran up to Kelston in great style, passing another launch just outside coming down. This launch, seeing that we had the lock keeper with us, turned about and came back, so that he was able, after he had let us through Kelston Lock, to embark on their launch back to Swinford. When once through Kelston Lock, Mr. Sheppard's boat-houses are only a few yards away, and we brought the boat round and ran into his place, informing him that we should be leaving her in his charge for the present, but that he was not to do other than tie her up there since we might be using her again during the summer. Time was short since we did not reach Mr. Sheppard's rafts until four-thirty, and our train left at five-thirty. We had to get out all our equipment, arrange for this to be taken to the Station, also to change our clothes, and have tea. Having done the latter first, and having sent all our stores off to the Station, other than what we wanted for the purpose of changing, we found we had very little time to spare. We ended by a race for

the train, and just arrived on the platform as the train ran in. We bundled our heavy equipment into the guard's van, and our own things into the carriage. We called out to Mr. Sheppard's son to look after the boat for us, and we fell back exhausted on to the seats. This train entailed a change at Bath, at which place we were able to examine our belongings and see if we had everything with us. Luckily we had, and we were also then able to take a ticket, which we had not time to do at Saltford.

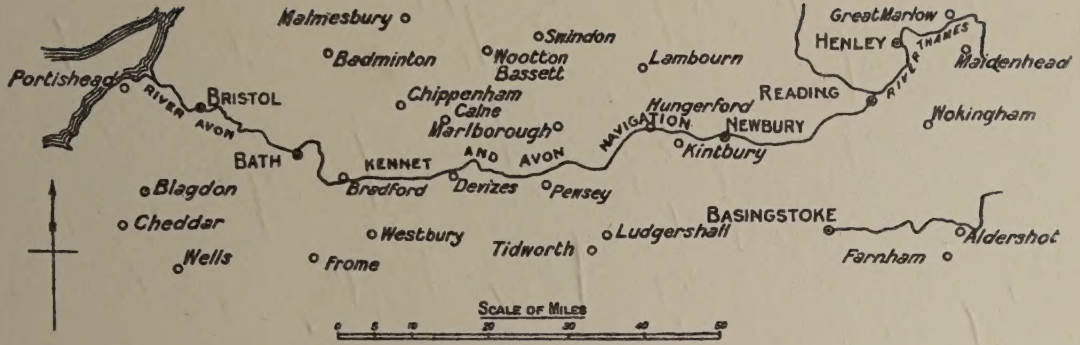
Our car was waiting for us at Chippenham Station, and having packed everything on board after difficulties, we once more returned to our home. And now we must wish the reader of this narrative good-bye, and we will only say that if he enjoyed reading the tale of our experiences in our small boat from Reading to Bristol half as much as we enjoyed ourselves, then we feel sure that he is satisfied.

It is an experience well worth the time and trouble which one may be put to occasionally in going through this old canal, and it is an experience which we shall no doubt repeat at some later date.

We have, however, in mind the subject of taking our boat not back to the Thames through the Kennet and Avon Canal, but to take a somewhat longer journey by passing up the Severn as far as Sharpness, thence by the Gloucester Canal, via Gloucester and Worcester, on to the Warwick and Birmingham Canal, which is joined by the Oxford Canal between Leamington and Daventry. By this canal we shall then return once more to the Thames. However, that is a matter for another day, and if fates or the opportunity allow us to so venture, then we hope to again re-count our adventures in a tale such as we have now given you, but this for another day.

THE END

MAP OF CANAL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Wokingham
Marlborough
NAVIGATION
NEWBURY
BATH
KENNET AND AVON
Kintbury
Blagdon
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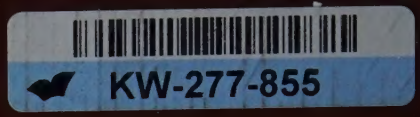
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